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Nigeria, Factor 16: Education

Nigeria: Education Improvement

Introduction:

Nigeria, being one of the most rapidly growing countries in the twenty-first century, is estimated to be home to around 1.11 billion people by the year 2100 (Digital Journal. Web). The population of 174.5 million is continuously rising which is raising some questions. One of the most important questions is how will that country be able to provide healthy food and clean water for such a large population? How will so many people be able to access health care? What jobs will be available for people? Will the government be able to guarantee quality education for each of its citizens? Agriculture currently accounts for an average of 41 percent of Nigeria's total gross domestic product (GDP) (Advameg, Inc.) What changes will need to occur in order for Nigeria to support an astronomical growth in population? It is quite clear there will be a catastrophe if changes are not made soon to address the emerging crisis. I believe education is the key to a brighter future for Nigeria. With education, many problems could be avoided before they even occur. Education can make the difference in having a stable amount of food or having none at all. Nigeria is currently struggling to provide substandard education for its people. With dilapidated buildings and very limited resources, education appears to be low on the government's priority list. With a shift in attitude, education could alter the future of this country and change the direction, making Nigeria a prosperous and wonderful place. Better education could bring changes that would improve the quality of life of Nigerians and would ensure food security. These changes could bring better agricultural advances and practices for a healthier future for the people who live there. Education could provide each person living there with opportunities they would not have otherwise. Education could open the door for this county to be a leading agricultural nation with its abundant fertile land and warm climate.

Typical Nigerian Family:

In Nigeria, men have the highest position in the household making up the majority of the family's income. Women stay home to take care of children and work on farms for any extra money. Living Conditions without indoor plumbing, or electricity are very common. Women and children also walk at least a mile for clean water. Their homes are made of mud brick or reed, and sometimes cinder blocks. These living conditions are the standard for seventy percent of the population. The majority of the Nigerian population wakes up early and will consume several meals throughout the day, starting with an early breakfast around 5:00 in the morning and ending with dinner at 9:00 at night. Native foods eaten regularly include rice, mangos, yams, and plantains. Primary schooling, which last only six years, is mandatory and is offered by the government. Junior, or secondary schooling, for children is optional and lasts three years. Most children attend Junior school even though it is optional. After junior secondary schooling, children usually choose the path they take in life- technical, including agriculture, or scientific, which usually leads to senior secondary school, which lasts for three more years. The government provides all health care, yet sometimes individual companies are required to cover cost or provide access to healthcare.

Typical Nigerian Farm:

The average Nigerian farm can support a wide variety of crops because of their soil. The main crops grown in Nigeria are soybeans, plantains, and cocoa beans. Though they have very versatile soil, meaning the land is good for a wide variety of crops and livestock. Nigeria lacks modern day tools such as plows and tractors that we have in America. Without the proper tools, they farm with manual labor, even though their farmers are aging and the costly setbacks of not having the proper tools. Most farmers

sell and trade their crops for other goods at local markets. They mostly practice sustenance farming but they also engage in crop rotation, animal rearing, meat production, shifting cultivation, fish farming, and commercial agriculture.

Setbacks:

Though there are many setbacks for Nigerian farm families, a few of the major ones include lacking the necessary resources to increase crop yield, the lack of proper transportation used to transfer crops and tools, and the general lack of knowledge of the farmers due to the poor education systems in Nigeria. Not only do farmers suffer, it has been proven that the less education one receives, the more children and less money they bring in; currently in Africa, the ratio of women to children are 1:5.6, and the majority of women haven't received much above a first grade education (Bits of Science. Web). If allowed, education can give people more opportunities at getting jobs to support their families and also in helping them become both more successful and productive. Education not only opens new opportunities for an individual or their family, but it can help the world. If more Nigerians were able to receive a higher level of education, the fast-growing population could be under better control, which would take some of the weight off their outdated agriculture industry, giving it time to mechanize and expand to a better, more productive industry.

Issues in the Education System:

A quote that explains a significant problem Nigeria is and will be facing and struggling with for quite a long time states "Over the last decade, Nigeria's exponential growth in population has put immense pressure on the country's resources and on already overstretched public services and infrastructure." (UNICEF. Web). Overpopulation is a problem that should not be overlooked and, with the right kind of power and effort can be avoided. "Forty percent of Nigerian children aged 6-11 do not attend any primary school with the Northern region recording the lowest school attendance rate in the country, particularly for girls." (UNICEF. Web) The important factor for the future is the present. If the statistics keep up with the same averages they have today, the future of agriculture, along with the rest of the world, is promised with both a country and continent full of hungry people along with no resources to fix them. Children are not required to go to school past the age of six, as most of them stay at home to help their mother's farm. These children need to be in school receiving an education.

"Despite a significant increase in net enrollment rates in recent years, it is estimated that about 4.7 million children of primary school age are still not in school." (UNICEF. Web) Calculating the percentage of females with the ratio of women to children, you get the number 13,160,000, which is the number of children that will come from the uneducated portion of the present population. The number is very large considering that the number of children are brought up in poor cities where they will most likely not receive an education and be forced into work, just as the generations before them did. "Increased enrollment rates have also created challenges in ensuring quality education and satisfactory learning achievement as resources are spread more thinly across a growing number of students. It is not rare to see cases of 100 pupils per teacher or students sitting under trees outside the school building because of the lack of classrooms." (UNICEF.Web) Americans are used to classroom sizes of at most 25 students per class, I simply cannot imagine 100 students per teacher. This is a major problem, though I do not feel as if it is damaging the children since they are at least exposed to an environment where learning is present. It is a great thing that more children are enrolling in educational systems, but it is a shame that they do not have access to more luxurious and specialized training and education. The government should set aside more money to help build up and strengthen the school systems for future generations to come. It would be a rewarding situation on both sides—the students could enjoy school and gain knowledge and skills that they could use in the future, and the country gains more educated and intelligent citizens. To help with this problem, Nigeria needs to understand the importance of having more teachers per student, or develop a mentor program that ensures the importance of education.

"Another challenge in Nigeria is the issue of girls' education. In the North particularly, the gender gap remains particularly wide and the proportion of girls to boys in school ranges from 1 girl to 2 boys to 1 to

3 in some States.” (UNICEF. Web) Sadly, discrimination against gender still exists. Young girls are sold off to marriage instead of being provided the opportunity to receive an education. This problem should be addressed by encouraging students to stay in school. Advocating the positives of staying enrolled and being active in school by giving examples and putting on programs could improve the numbers of females attending schools. It could help break the gender barrier and prove that women can have just as much power and will as men, and it could help balance the gender ratio out in the long run.

Women who are educated tend to have smaller families because they recognize the high costs of raising children and want to put more emphasis on the quality of their own children’s lives. The children they do have are healthier because the women have more resources to prenatal health care and are able to eat a healthier diet while pregnant. (Science News Examiner.web) The educated women are more informed of the different methods of birth control to prevent unwanted pregnancies. This is very important in order to control the population.

Poor education is quite common in African countries, so the typical Nigerian family is at loss for what they could be benefiting from. The dropout rates originate from money—child labor, young marriage for females, and economic hardship. Because income usually depends on education and experience, it would make sense that, if the parents did not do as well as to receiving an education, that the children would not, either, and that they would need to help provide money for the family, thus dropping out and becoming part of a hard sociological cycle to break.

If the current trends continue, the population will increase and the resources will decrease, making way for civil battles over things we, today, take granted, such as sanitary water, nutritious food, and even sources of energy like coal or firewood. Fossil fuels would be practically nonexistent, and, with good circumstances, there would be some alternative source of energy, perhaps renewable, which would help the environment. Still, energy would be scarce, and with the future population nearing 11 billion, conflict would be bound to occur. Food availability and quantity could be in the hands of the children not enrolled in an education system.

Improving the Education Systems:

With the future in our hands, and the possibilities being endless, there are so many things that we can change and help with. What if we could boost learning and help teach those in need? Can we could improve the current conditions in which schools in Nigeria take on? We can advocate the advantages of having an education to Nigerians and what it can do for them, their community, and their world. By having more enlightened and literate people, they could upgrade their country to make it more efficient, prosperous, and stable. Nigeria is full of rich fertile soil, and that asset could easily be ruined by ignorant agricultural practices. By educating their people, they would not only be benefiting by entrusting the future in smarter hands, they would be getting much in return—a safe environment where, with proper care and improvement, prosperity is promised.

“However, there is an important question as whether there is a causal link between education and economic performance, and if so, in what direction. It may be that the two are associated, but not causally linked. It also could be that better economic performance leads to an increase in educational participation and achievement. Or it could be that having more people with education leads to improved economic performance.” (Education Counts. Web) I find that this quote proves true, as it is a two-sided battle to balance out effort. You have to give to receive, and if both the people and the government put forth the effort, little by little, there could be great fortune in the account of the country altogether. Corresponding is just as important as assessing one’s own work-- it can not only bring out the best qualities from a group, but it can bring them together to mold and shape their plans for the future as well as their culture. By giving up something, such as small-scale work, for something more beneficial and promising toward the future, Nigerians could improve the quality of life for both themselves and future generations.

“A country's economy becomes more productive as the proportion of educated workers increases, since educated workers are able to more efficiently carry out tasks that require literacy and critical thinking.” (Investopedia US. Web.) This quote is very applicable to many situations. Basically, what you put in is

what you get in return. If most Nigerians were highly educated, they would realize that sort of dilemma they were headed towards—a country drained of resources and full of people. They would start planning ahead so that they could have food security as well as population control. Higher education would help the people so that they could not only perform their greatest, they could unify and build up their strengths to create a successful union overwhelmed by prosperous people. People that could help change the world because of an education. People that could contribute to the discovery of more efficient biofuels or the discovery of a new life-changing hybrid plant.

“The \$300 million Nigeria Youth Employment and Social Support Operation (YESSO) focuses on poor youth and the poorest 10 percent of households in participating states. It provides youth aged 18 to 35 with opportunities for work and skills training, and improved access to social services for the vulnerable.” (World Bank Group. Web.) There have been many successful stories of improving the past education systems in Nigeria, including the works of YESSO. But still, the education systems remain flawed and will remain so until a tremendous change comes about.

The typical Nigerian family could even make higher education possible by contributing to their community in some way. They could volunteer to help teach the children based on what knowledge they possess. They could help build safe school environments, which could encourage children to aspire to stay in school and receive an education. A family that does carpenter work can contribute by helping provide resources or labor to the community; schools in Nigeria do not usually have desks for the students--something that is so expected for Americans is a luxury for Nigerians. It would take a huge amount of work but the effort put in would come out to benefit the world for the greatest. My personal solution to bettering education in Nigeria involves the local government, local organizations, and everyday citizens getting involved to help out education in their country. By getting these involved, parents will see the importance of education for their children, and some may even volunteer to teach. Though limited, facilities could be completed at a later date so that education can continue to increase. The highest benefit to Nigeria would be to implement a specialized educational program that helps with all of these things.

Conclusion:

Education about a career or job is just as important as that particular career or job. They go hand in hand in our world and society as a whole. Having more education and better ways of getting education systems can bring new changes and can improve the quality of live for Nigeria. These simple yet effective changes can benefit the future of agriculture as it brings new ideas, new research, and life changes ideas for our entire world. Once everyone has an equal opportunity at education, our abilities would be endless. By giving everyone a chance, without discriminating against age, wealth, gender, or race, we would be allowing so much more positive in return-- more able-bodied people to contribute to society by practicing population control, managing their resources, and connecting new ideas and contributing solutions to current issues. If we were to help them, lift them up from their time of uncertainty, unawareness, and poverty, Nigeria with its prime resources and products, could prosper and become a city full of innovation. Education is key in most societies, whereas Nigeria has the soil and it has it land, it simply needs the extra knowledge to make it prosper.

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