

Emily Acevedo  
Santa Fe College  
Starke, Florida  
India, Factor: Education

### **Why is India a Developing Country?**

Why is India on the list as a developing country? My impression was the country was very rooted in their culture and religion. They seem to have a good economy and I knew they were a world leader in the production of essential crops such as wheat and rice. There seem to be plenty of jobs, especially in technology. I know some Indians who have moved to Florida to open businesses. They are very intelligent people and value education for their children.

I was recently attending an animal ethics workshop and during that workshop, a comparison was made of how much Americans spend on food compared to other countries. India was used as an example when the presenter pointed out that 51% of the income in India is spent on food. The American percentage was 16%. (C. Sanders, Florida State Fair Ethics Workshop, January 24, 2017). The 51% was high but I never regarded India as a developing country because of their success and growth economically.

When I started my research on a developing country, I was surprised to find India on the list. The Oxford Dictionary defines a developing country as “a poor agricultural country that is seeking to become more advanced economically and socially.” The information about the amount of income spent on food immediately came to mind. If so much was being spent on food, what was the impact on the quality of life? A good economy and plentiful food supplies did not equate with 51% of a family’s income spent on food.

Upon further research, I discovered that the majority of the population lives in rural areas and has the greatest amount of poverty. There is no one clear definition of a poverty level and there have been concerns about the comparability of the numbers. Definitions or criteria are changed frequently. Organizations such as the World Bank, United Nations, and others have their definition and criteria to measure poverty levels. India has its definitions and criteria and each region in India has a different standard.

The Indian Planning Commission in 2013 calculated that the poverty level had fallen to 22%. The rural areas were 25.7% of the poverty level. In contrast, 13.7% of the population below the poverty level was living in urban areas. Some of the causes of poverty frequently cited are corruption, lack of education, the caste system, population growth, and mismanagement. (Rao, July 2013, n.pag). There have been programs and schemes to address the cause and effect of poverty, but these programs have been disappointing to the people they were trying to serve. Corruption and mismanagement have been barriers to success in India.

In today’s economic world, India is considered to be one of the powerhouses. The answer is simple when one thinks of the economic boom they are referring to urban areas such as Mumbai, Delhi, Bangalore. The condition of the rural poor is not part of the world picture of India as an economic powerhouse.

Kaur (February 2013) stated that “the performance of any country is not just its economic development but also its social development” (n. pag). The family has the greatest impact on changing poverty in a nation. It is hard to realize the quality of life could be improved or the cycle of poverty broken when you have struggled and subsisted for generations. Mindset is a major obstacle because of the quality of life and the need to sustain life plays a major role in your perception of your rights and needs. Examples of the family’s needs that may be affected by the quality of life are food security and income.

Families typically survive on less than the US \$2 a day. They continue to conceive more children than they can support in an attempt to earn extra income or to have someone take care of them later in life. (Kaur, November, 2013, n.pag).

India may have a rural poverty rate of 25.7%, but the effect of poverty on the children of the country is alarming. India has one of the highest infant mortality rates in the world at 38 per 1000 births. (World Bank, 2015). Overpopulation is an outcome of poverty and produces added children and only makes the situation worse. The income of the family has to be stretched to feed the additional children. Forty-five percent of children under age five in India are malnourished, underweight, or stunted (Kaur, February 2013, n.pag).

The parents have children involved in child labor. This is the most common way that a parent uses their kids for extra income in both rural and urban areas. The tasks performed by these children are considered to be hazardous (Debu C, April 2014, n. pag). Depending upon how long a child works in that position the more likely that by their teenage years they will have several life-threatening diseases. Unfortunately, the girls cannot go into child labor and are exploited and trafficked for money. In some cases, children are offered by the parent in lieu of a loan that they may have taken. The girls who could not do child labor, they are likely to have some STD's, married off early in exchange for money or have several children of their own. (Debu C, April 2014, n. pag).

The primary farming method for the rural poor is subsistence farming. The family works a small plot of land to produce food for their families. A good harvest may also produce a small income. The system is subsistence because the food produced is consumed by the family and lacks proper balanced nutrition. The climate and the availability of water controls which vegetables and fruits the family will survive on. There is not adequate income to purchase goods and services including additional food sources. The monsoon season makes them very dependent on a good harvest but also destroys crops.

In the northeast of India, 85% of farming is shifting cultivation. This is a type of subsistence farming. The crop is cultivated until it begins to decline because of the overuse of the soil. When the farmer is finished with the land, it is cleared and burned allowing it to replenish. In the past, the plot was farmed for 3 years and allowed to remain fallow for 25-30 years. Because of overpopulation and increased need for food, the 25-30 year fallow has been reduced to 2-3 years.

Although a traditionally accepted method of farming, shifting cultivation has become an environmental problem. There has been a loss of native species, invasion of non-native plants and soil that has not recovered from overuse. The size of national forests has been reduced. In a nation with a growing population and declining agriculture production, India will not be able to meet its projected 50% increase needed to feed its people by 2036. (Wikipedia, Agriculture).

India holds the second position in agricultural production in the world and is the second-biggest producer of in cattle, grains, nuts and more. With these production numbers, it is odd to think that India has the highest number of malnourished people even though the problem isn't in production but distribution. There are large commercial farms and plantations in the north and eastern areas of the country. The problem there is not production but distribution. The foods produced on these farms are exported. The food produced in India is being exported for money leaving the products that were left at an increased price.

Malnourishment is an outcome of poverty. The poor have large families, small plots of land with limited production for personal use, few resources for income, and lack access to essential fruits and vegetables. As a result, overpopulation, malnutrition, a high child mortality rate, and a lack of basic services to sustain a quality of life have continued. There has been some improvement in the poverty rate in the last

ten years through government programs. But, these programs have been embedded with a tradition of corruption, bribes, and mismanagement.

Education is a key factor in affecting agriculture productivity, household income, and food availability. Education is not just a literacy issue. Education has an impact on agriculture skills and methods, family food and health safety, economics and purchasing power. Schools are available in the rural poverty areas but are less accessible. A new program such as free education and offering free lunch in schools similar to America has had a positive impact. The children of poor families are denied the ability to go to school, spending their time in an attempt to earn additional income by means of begging or a job. The focus of education has been on males. According to the Indian national literacy rate for males, 82.14% and women have a 74.04% literacy rate. (Wikipedia, Literacy, n, pag). This rate is misleading because the poorer rural areas have significantly lower literacy rates due to less access to schools and less of a tradition to get an education. The urban areas have better education systems, employment and a tradition of education in the family.

Agriculture education can have a positive impact on how to how to effectively grow and cultivate crops without destroying the land. Government assistance by training new skills and providing technology could increase yields and/or provide new crops for income. Agriculture education affects the income because most rural families are subsistence farmers and with the smaller yield of crops the less food they have to feed themselves let alone earn an income based on crop sales. Because of the pressure to produce higher crop yields due to overpopulation, direct assistance to educate rural areas on better land management will provide a positive impact nationwide.

As previously quoted, “the performance of any country is not just its economic development but also its social development” (Kaur, November 2013, n. pag). To change the value of education for all members of the rural family is essential to defeat poverty and improve agricultural production. There is a mindset that does not value education because eating and surviving is more important. Education can help break the poverty cycle and the image that subsistence farming is their caste in life. Family education is not only literacy. The family and especially the females would benefit initially from education on safe food practices, health and nutrition, family planning, and literacy.

Education is only one factor affecting food security and poverty. Using education as a key factor can impact other factors including sustainable agriculture, malnutrition, and population growth.

Recommendations to improve food security are to organize a pilot community that is a blend of a farmers cooperative with a mission like the experimental living community known as ELCOT. The first ELCOT was established in the Philippines as a self-contained community and is still operating in 2019. The mission of the ELCOT was to “model a community where we can farm our land responsibly, grow our food naturally, market our produce globally, generate our energy efficiently while preserving proper balance in our eco-system for the next generation.”

The Indian plan would include two voluntary pilot cooperatives in the north and south regions of the country. The coop would be managed by local leaders and would begin as a mechanism to unite individual agriculture families with a unified crop, access to supplies and services, and a system to market their product. The coop would be piloted by free grant funds from the Indian government to help families adapt to a new crop or animal production. The initial grant would be no less than five years to give the farmers an opportunity to organize and acquire the skills and knowledge to manage the coop. Business skills and knowledge would be available to all of the adult members of the community so they deliberately monitor for corruption and schemers.

Membership in the coop is voluntary. The success of the coop will attract families that did not initially join due to past failures of other programs. The members in the coop do not have to surrender their land

or cease subsistence farming. Their participation in the new production will allow them to use the income from the coop to move away from subsistence farming to sustained farming.

Though seemingly applicable on paper, the greatest challenge that this program will face is the people. Unfortunately, many government programs in the past have left the people distrusting and suspicious due to mismanagement and corruption. To effectively implement the program, we must first identify the leaders within the community and build a relationship founded on trust. The members will decide on the focus of the diversified crop or animal production.

The first year would be to provide technical assistance from agricultural experts to help the community diversify on a five year plan. The focus will be on one-on-one technical assistance while building personal relationships. Small group interactions will be added and family members will be provided workshops and training as requested. The entire community is encouraged to participate in the planning process and a committee of local farmers will oversee the coop. The diversification could involve a crop or animal husbandry project to be determined with the assistance of the advisors. The community through the grant would provide technical assistance, equipment, and resources to get the new initiative started. The grant would have sustained funding over five years to allow the new product to become self-sufficient.

A new product(s) could be added as the ELCOT became more financially sound. An example might be aquaculture. The initiative would include decisions about the time of harvest, getting the product to market, processing the product in-community or outside. Some jobs would be created and shared by members of the community. Improvements to the infrastructure of the community would be implemented to support the new community and its products. Infrastructure might include better roads, warehouses, and/or support services and businesses.

Guiding principles for the coop would include: support services for agricultural production and areas of personal interest and a marketing plan to include regional identification with emphasis on food safety.

Another aspect of the coop will be an outreach to families who would benefit from education on food safety, family planning, sanitation and health practices. The community would decide the priority for the family outreach program. If there is a local school, the community would be involved in ensuring that the school is offering the highest possible educational standards and has the resources to achieve the goals. Enrichment and literacy classes could also be offered to adult members of the community, particularly the women who are currently undereducated. All of these outreach services would take time to develop based on the mistrust of the community.

The coop will have many components based upon education such as diversified agriculture practices, crop production, and business and farm management implemented as the coop expands. When covering the area of diversified agriculture farmers will learn of new crops that can be grown and sold for income that will be divided among the members. They also learn about livestock, aquaculture and new crops that can be grown in their region.

A world power in economics and food production does not necessarily mean this goal has been achieved for all the citizens. Underlying factors, if not addressed, could cause a country to collapse. India is a good example. The country is a world-class producer of wheat, rice, cattle, and other crops but the people outside of the urban areas are in poverty and malnourished. Crops produced in large quantities such as wheat are exported and this has caused prices of commodities and goods to rise.

India knows that is it faced with a crisis within the next twenty years because its population is outgrowing their food production for use in the country. The rural areas are characterized by subsistence farming. The soils in these areas are failing due to overuse and pressure to grow more crops.

There is also a disparity of educational opportunities in rural areas. Centuries of corruption and mismanagement have contributed to the lack of success in the rural areas.

There has been some success in government programs in the last ten years. The poverty level has declined, infant mortality has declined, and school lunches are now provided to offset malnutrition. Programs that had great promise that failed could have been more successful if there were serious efforts to address corruption, bribes, and mismanagement. India must look to new and innovative ways to serve the people and to address the lack of confidence by the people in government efforts to improve the quality of life.

Education is the perfect key factor with the broadest impact. It has the ability to incorporate multiple key factors into the vision for change. Key factors cannot operate independently and be successful. India needs a broader vision to address the needs of the whole.

## Bibliography

- Debu, C. (April 5, 2014). Child labor in India. N.pag. Retrieved from <http://www.mapsofindia.com/my-india/society/>.
- ELCOT International Experimental Living Community of Tomorrow. (2017). n.pag. Retrieved from <http://www.elcotintl.com/>.
- ELCOT International Experimental Living Community of Tomorrow. (2019). n.pag. Retrieved from <http://www.elcotintl.com/>
- Kaur, R. (February 8, 2013). Quality of life in India. n.pag. Retrieved from <http://www.mapsofindia.com/my-india/india/>.
- Kaur, R. (June 9, 2013). Poverty and its causes in India, n.pag. Retrieved from <http://www.mapsofindia.com/my-india/society/>.
- Kaur, R. (November 21, 2013). Why India is still a poor country. n.pag. Retrieved from <http://www.mapsofindia.com/my-india/society/>.
- “Developing Country”. The Oxford Dictionary For Windows. Retrieved from <https://download.cnet.com/The-Oxford-Dictionary-for-Windows-10>
- Rao, K. (2013). India’s poverty level falls to record 22%: Planning commission, page 1-5. Retrieved from <http://www.livemint.com/politics/>.
- “Agriculture”. Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia online, page 1-12. Retrieved from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agriculture/>.
- “Literacy in India”. Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia, page 1-16. Retrieved from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Literacy\\_in\\_India/](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Literacy_in_India/).
- World Bank. (2015). Data, n.pag. Retrieved from <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/>