

Lydia Rigge
Redwood Valley High School
Redwood Falls, Minnesota
Chad, Education

An Improved Education System in Chad and Its Impacts

Education is a basic human right that can give an individual endless opportunities throughout his or her life, but it is often taken for granted. Here in the United States, children may grumble in the morning when they have to wake up, they make jokes about how bad the school lunch is, and then they go home and refuse to complete homework, saying how unfair it is. But many children around the world never even get the chance to attend school, much less have a nutritious lunch provided for them. Instead, they wake up and go work, wish they had enough food to eat at lunchtime, and continue to work through the evening on an empty stomach. Currently, there is a big difference in the quality of education between prosperous countries, such as the United States, and developing countries, including Chad. Giving children an adequate education will allow them to contribute to their society, improving their quality of life and the lives of those around them. Providing citizens with a successful education system can especially have a positive impact on malnutrition and food security.

Chad is one of the poorest and most illiterate countries in the world. In 2016, Chad's literacy rate was at 35.4%; only five countries in the world have lower literacy rates (Cago). This poor rate makes it difficult for the country of Chad to evolve, progress, and leave behind the status of an undeveloped country. Many of the citizens of Chad are occupied with simply surviving and providing food and shelter for their families, leaving education as a second thought. Many families in developing countries believe that education is only a distraction from the work that needs to be done at home to survive, but a good education is actually the key to improving the quality of life in Chad. By becoming literate and educated, individuals learn how to take matters into their own hands and provide for themselves. They become capable risk takers who can promote progress toward their own development.

The majority of citizens in Chad live in rural farming communities, with less than one-third of the population living in towns and cities. Many families have been making a living off of raising livestock, although the weather in recent years has made this a difficult task. Recently, there have been many droughts that have left families without livestock. Once a family in this area loses all of its livestock, it is incredibly hard for them to recover. Because of this, many men have begun to look for work in cities, but with so many people looking for jobs, wages have decreased by nearly a third ("Education & Jobs"). Many other citizens farm crops, such as cotton, sorghum, and millet. Cotton is the biggest export in Chad, along with oil. Common diets include dairy products, millet, and porridge. Since many families in Chad only farm to provide for their own family, food is usually grown and used by individual families instead of bought at markets or stores. Agriculture is a major source of income for the majority of families in Chad, but a poor climate and low resources make it hard to do successfully.

The typical family in Chad looks much different than the nuclear family commonly found in the United States. There are some nuclear families living in cities, but it is very rare. Men will usually have multiple wives and live with their extended families (“Chad”). Because polygyny is so common in this culture, child marriage is extremely prevalent. Over two-thirds of girls are married before they turn 18 years old (“People & Culture”). Since girls are married off at such young ages, usually before age 15, they do not get a chance to finish their education. They leave their families and educations behind to start their own family, and at a very young age. Becoming pregnant before their bodies are developed and ready can be incredibly hard on them and lead to early deaths for them and their newborn children. The child and maternal mortality rates are very high in this country due to the young marriage age for girls (Kulild). This way of life is not safe for these young women or their potential children. Education programs that keep girls in school could not only benefit them academically, but also keep them and future children safe and healthy.

When Chad gained independence in 1960, the government made attending primary school mandatory and free for children; however, this is not always the reality for schools throughout the country. The government spends less than 3% of its funds on education, leaving hardly anything for teachers’ salaries. Many schools are therefore having to require a fee for students to attend classes (“Education & Jobs”). Between this fee and education already being a low priority, many families choose to keep their children at home, especially their daughters. Since girls are usually married by age 15, many families do not believe they need to complete their education. Parents do not see their daughters going on to have careers and being able to provide for themselves; they will simply be married off to men. Families not being able to afford to send their children to school and the government not enforcing mandatory primary school leads to the low adult literacy rate of about 30% in Chad (Cago). When children do not become educated they grow into uneducated adults, creating a cycle. This cycle of illiteracy leaves the country of Chad with an extremely slow development of agriculture, wealth, economy, and sufficient food supply.

One simple, effective, and budget-friendly way to improve the educational system in Chad is to focus on the students’ needs. Going to school should not seem like a chore; learning should be engaging and interesting. Giving students regular breaks throughout the school day allows them to focus their energy while working on their studies. Many countries, like Finland, have implemented educational systems that include students having the same teacher for several years in a row (Campos). This allows students to create a relationship with their teacher, resulting in many benefits: the teacher will understand the student and know how to teach and help them, the student will feel more comfortable in the school, the learning environment will be more productive, and the student will be more likely to return for several more years of education. A strong relationship between a student and teacher leads to a strong relationship between a student and his or her education. By simply having adequate breaks and a relationship with their teachers, students are already much more likely to want to continue in their educations and invest time into their futures.

Even though having the same teacher for multiple years is a potentially simple solution, in reality, it can be hard for teachers in Chad to stay in their positions for very long. The government does not spend much on education, and therefore many schools are extremely underfunded and there is not much motivation for young adults to become teachers. In this country, a career in teaching does not

always seem like a realistic way to provide for one's self or for one's family. Although the government may not be able to directly increase teacher wages by much, providing meals as part of the salary could be an adequate payment. The government could connect directly with farmers and offer them a break in taxes on days that they provide meals for local teachers, which would only have to be on school days. The implementation of a teacher training and certification system in Chad would also be greatly beneficial. Former and current teachers would host a simple teacher training series of classes to certify new teachers. This type of system would make becoming a teacher more appealing and more accessible, which would then lead to more teachers, smaller class sizes, better relationships, and an overall better education for students.

Although the previous solutions would be beneficial, the first problem that needs to be addressed is getting children into school buildings in the first place. So many parents in Chad are uneducated themselves and do not see the value in sending their children to school every day for not only primary school, but also secondary school. In order to get the children into schools regularly, the parents first need to be educated. The school system in Madagascar has included informing parents on the advantages of completing an education into their base curriculum (Lomborg). This basic instruction costs only \$2.30 per student and has seen benefits of nearly 600 times the initial cost. Adding this information into the education system in Chad would be very simple. The information could even be taught to new teachers during the teacher training and certification classes by previous teachers who are aware of the significance of a quality education. These teachers could then inform local parents by either hosting a parent-teacher class at the school or by going around and talking directly to families in the school's area. Passing on the knowledge in this way and instructing the parents would cost nothing but time and would greatly benefit children whose families were not sending them to school.

In order to break the cycle of illiteracy, parents have to be informed on the importance of their child's education and made aware that the long-term benefits even outweigh the immediate ones. By educating their children, parents are allowing them to grow into adults that have the ability to think critically, find work outside of their small villages, provide for themselves, and solve problems, such as food shortages and a poor economy. A parent who keeps their child from gaining an education is ultimately burdening them with a future of poverty and struggles, especially in an undeveloped country like Chad. By first informing the parents on the significance of a completed education, children are able to gain quality knowledge and learn how to make a difference in their communities. The cycle of illiteracy is changed into a cycle of motivation and change.

Although the government has established many primary schools in Chad, secondary schools and higher education opportunities are very rare for students choosing to continue their education. If there were more opportunities to continue education, it would be much more likely that students would be motivated to keep learning. If a child going throughout primary school knows that their education will not have the chance to continue, they will never have an adequate amount of motivation to work hard in their studies. The government should invest in the country's youth just a bit more by funding enough secondary and vocational schools in areas with large amounts of primary schools. Vocational and trade schools could be especially helpful. Learning how to work in a specific career streamlines the secondary educational process. Students are able to directly learn a trade and then immediately enter the workforce to start their new careers. Professors and students from these secondary schools

could also visit primary schools and talk to students about the opportunities a continued education provides. Motivation and a new understanding about education can be passed between students from different schools to create a community that makes learning a priority. The addition of more secondary and vocational schools will not only lead students to continue their educations, but will also provide the country with a capable workforce. These students will go on to become medical workers, businessmen, agriculturalists, scientists, teachers, and modern innovators. Chad needs citizens like these to improve the economy and secure sustainable food practices, but it cannot happen without the right amount of education and support from the government and communities.

Education is directly linked to poverty and food shortages. A country can never properly develop and flourish if its citizens are uneducated and illiterate. An educated individual can apply for jobs, sign contracts, and create a business plan. These are all steps needed to actively participate in the workforce or open a business. "For each \$1 invested in an additional year of schooling, earnings increase by \$5 in low-income countries" ("5 Ways"). These extra wages are gained simply by completing more schooling and can be used to provide for a family. Food supply and agricultural practices can also be positively impacted by educated citizens. An educated farmer will be equipped with knowledge and problem-solving skills that allow him or her to effectively and efficiently improve their crop yield and decrease waste (Colby). They can then provide for their family and possibly have a successful enough yield to go out and sell their crops, improving the economy and bringing food to other families in need.

Being educated also allows people to make informed decisions about their health. They can decide between vaccines and know when to see a doctor, and they would be more likely to have the funds to pay for that medical visit. Through even just a basic education, citizens of Chad would be better equipped to protect themselves and their families from disease and malnutrition. This is especially prevalent in the lives of young girls. Uneducated females who cannot support themselves are much more likely to get married at a young age, especially in Chad, and have children before they are ready. This results in high child and maternal mortality rates (Kulild). With proper secondary schools, there would be more trained medical workers helping to lower those same mortality rates and keep women and their children safe. A woman who can support and provide for herself is more likely to live a safer life, especially in developing countries, such as Chad. She would not have to get married before she is ready since she is capable of living a healthy life on her own. The many direct and indirect benefits of educated citizens could greatly increase Chad's nutritional and health statuses.

An uneducated person is much less likely to go out into his or her community, try new jobs and careers, and make real changes. Although a proper educational system in countries like Chad may not look like it has a bright future, there truly is hope for it. Two of the most basic rights of a human are the right to be educated and the right to proper nutrition. With the support of passionate people from all over the world, these rights can be provided for the people of any country and of any financial background. The quality of life in Chad is much different from that of the United States, and something needs to be done to help close that gap. Education is the key to making a difference in the lives of those who are struggling in developing nations. Everyone is capable of helping provide education for others. One simply needs to care- care for their own education and for others' educations. A difference can be made, children can be taught, and the hungry can be fed, but it will

not happen in an instant. The process needs to be started now so that future generations may enjoy quality education and nutritional food as real, tangible rights, not only in Chad, but all over the world.

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