

Akron-Westfield Community School

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Ethiopia, Conflict

Conflict Impacts Food Production, Security in Ethiopia

What Is Ethiopia Like?

Ethiopia is located on the horn of Africa which is in the eastern part of Africa. While being landlocked it has a very rich cultural and archeological history. Because it is landlocked it has a long and steroid history of famines and droughts.

In 2019 Ethiopia was ranked 91st out of 113 countries on the Global Food Security Index. Now in 2021, it is ranked 108th. I think they dropped off because of internal conflicts and mismanagement of expensive and risky projects.

Ethiopia is roughly 426,000 square miles with a population of 115 million. Just 20% or 23 million people live in an urban area. The other 80% live in rural areas, living off subsistence farming. In the United States this is nearly opposite with 83% living in cities and towns. Ethiopia's 3 biggest crops are tuff, wheat and sorghum. The average pay of an urban worker is 17 USD per month. The average pay of someone in the US is 37\$ an hour (Zip Recruiter).

History of Ethiopia

In 1973 Ethiopia went through a famine causing their leader, Halie Selassie to be overthrown starting a reign of terror by Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam. His reign created the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF), who started a war against their government. After that there was a series of new leaders, none lasting more than 5 years until in 1995 prime minister Meles Zenawi took the lead. After he died in 2012 Hailemariam Desalegn took the lead and under his reign there were many anti-government protests, causing him to step down in 2018. Aiby Ahmed, their current leader, escalated many conflicts Ethiopia was engaged in at the time, until 2020 when the TPLF rose again during an unconstitutional state election.

Ethiopia's Money Problems

Ethiopia has 42.79 billion USD worth of debt according to [statista.com](https://www.statista.com). They are this deep in debt because their plan for kickstarting their economy was debt reliant. They planned to borrow vast sums of money to get funds for projects that would eventually pay for themselves. One example of how they acquired this debt is, they borrowed from Chinese banks to kickstart their sugar industry. But mismanaged projects made Ethiopia's sugarcane production drop. On top of that their hydropower stations didn't generate enough revenue to pay for themselves, digging the hole deeper. Because Ethiopia's debt is so great, they cannot afford to fight the hunger crisis brought on by the UN sanctions.

TPLF, Military Action, and Sanctions

The UN sanctioned Tigray, a region in Ethiopia, because the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) attacked a federal military base. Naturally, the Ethiopian prime minister, Abiy Ahmed fought back and started a war. And then the TPLF retaliated and marched to within 100 feet of the capital city where Mr. Ahmed executed a stunning reversal and stopped them in their tracks. Mr. Ahmed is the 2019 Nobel Peace prize winner and he is quoted saying "Nothing will stop us. The enemy will be destroyed." to a group of soldiers going to fight the TPLF according to [nytimes.com](https://www.nytimes.com).

The war started during the beginning of harvest causing roughly half the harvest to fail. According to Martin Griffiths, the situation in Ethiopia is a lot like the Somali famine of 2011 which claimed almost a quarter-million lives. Now people are "eating roots and flowers and plants instead of a normal steady meal." - Griffiths. This is all amplified by just 10% of the necessary humanitarian supplies reaching Tigray. Tigray is being blockaded to stop the flow of supplies to the TPLF. These blockages are the same ones stopping Tigray's humanitarian efforts by outside countries.

The "Triple Failure"

According to [oxfam.org](https://www.oxfam.org), 3 things must fail to create a famine, production, access, and response. Ethiopia's production took a huge hit with all of the failed projects and the debt. The war starting during harvest also piled on top of the production issues. Access was hindered by the blockade the UN sanctioned. While it is successful in stopping weapons going to the TPLF it also stopped food from getting to innocent civilians. Third and finally the response. This is most likely going to be determined by how the public views the situation. If it gets into mainstream media, and people pile on with donations,

then Ethiopia receives the help it needs to pull itself out of this hole. If not, they would be left to mostly their own devices and it could be a repeat of the 2011 Somalia famine.

Solutions

Some potential solutions to Ethiopia's hunger crisis can be found by looking at how Somalia dealt with its famine. They invested in food production and ensured it could be reliable year after year. Another way they focused on food production was by allowing outside intervention in the market to prevent them from crashing. Next, they focused on access solutions. They did this by working on the roads, communications, and water access. Third and finally, response solutions. This includes social protection such as allowing poor households access to food and insurance through the government.

Step One: Food Production

Currently, Ethiopia imports almost 2 billion dollars worth of food every year according to usda.gov. I think they should focus on their internal food production and raise crop prices to encourage farmers. If they did this, while putting them in more debt, I believe it would help them get out of it in the long run because ideally, it would save them 2 billion dollars every year. Also outside intervention in the markets could be very beneficial to take some of the load off of Ethiopia's shoulders if the markets do take a turn for the worse. Finally, according to the [Global Food Security Index](#) Ethiopia, while having 29% less volatile food production than average, their food safety and quality is 40% lower, protein access is 33% worse, and change in average food costs is 70% higher than normal. Having some more focus on what farmers grow, how they grow it, and some outside help to set food prices would be a huge step in the right direction.

Step Two: Accessibility

Improving communications could help food get through the blockade. If they could radio ahead saying a code word to let them through then the whole situation could be alleviated. Improved roads would also improve humanitarian efforts because they could get supplies faster and more intact on a highway versus a dirt road. Lastly, water access is just in general a good thing especially because Ethiopia's access is nearly 20% lower than average.

Step Three: Response Solutions

If there was a better or faster response to Ethiopia, this whole situation could have been avoided. This would include installing some social programs to provide aid for people whose homes get destroyed in the war. These social programs would also grant some people free insurance and/or food throughout the year if they can't pay for it themselves.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Ethiopia is in the midst of a civil war against the Tigray People's Liberation Front. The UN blockaded Tigray to stop supplies from reaching the TPLF, but that is causing widespread hunger. And on top of all that, they took a large gamble by borrowing vast sums of money to kickstart their economy, and it didn't pay off. If this continues they could start the "Triple Failure" they already have done 2 with the production and access. Now they are waiting for the response.

Some solutions would be to copy what Ethiopia did in 2011, they focused on food production by paying farmers more and Ethiopia should also focus on the lower scores on the Global Food Security Index. Next, they need more accessibility and communications. Communications would help get food through the blockade and new roads would get it there faster. Better roads would also lead to better water access which they are also lacking in on the GFSI. Third and finally, response solutions. I believe they should install some social programs to stop relapses from happening before they start. Those social programs could include food and some insurance for families who can't pay for that themselves.

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