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Ethiopia, Factor 16: Education

Ethiopia: Improving Education

Could you imagine living in a country that almost every family is under the poverty line? What about starting your career at the age of 14 or younger? Could you go to sleep at night without enough food in your diet to keep you full? Imagine how horrible the living conditions would have to be to get to that point. This describes a typical Ethiopian passage into being a teenager. In comparison, in America we get a “used” car, get more freedom from our parent's strict rules, and eat more junk food than we ever have before. American teenagers complain about going to school for a whole day, while Ethiopian teens usually start their careers and have no chance at a formal education. The comparison is startling to say the least, but helping Ethiopia become a powerful and strong country would only take a few simple steps and little support from the government or outside sources. Education for Ethiopia's youngest citizen's is the most powerful change that needs to occur to help this country come out of the mire that afflicts about 50% of the population. Agriculture takes part in more than half of Ethiopia's economy, and employs 80% of the population (10 Facts about Poverty in Ethiopia). Strengthening the agriculture sector and involving youth in learning about agriculture is one way to make a change for the better. Ethiopia has the second largest population in Africa and almost two-thirds of the population is illiterate. Showing that education is a problem that must be dealt with and more accessible in the country. The health in Ethiopia is atrocious. Only 49% of this country has access to clean water meaning that over half of the people struggle to find clean water. Making people walk very long distances in search of water that is not always the most sanitary or clean. There is much baggage that comes with helping this country thrive and changing a few things can help this country keep progressing in the right direction.

In Ethiopia the average sized rural family is usually 6-12 family members. Rural women have twice as many children as urban women because rural women don't have any family services close by that they can access. The husbands parents usually live with the family once the kids have gotten older and they can no longer care for themselves. A typical Ethiopian family consumes two meals a day with some snacks in between. Ethiopians have developed a vegetarian diet, because of the lack of meat that they have around where they live. Some religions are against eating pork all together. They don't raise pigs due to this. A traditional Ethiopian diet is very high in fiber, low in dairy products, and low in fat. Pregnant women eat a very non-nutritious diet while pregnant, which is called *pica*. They eat clay because it helps alleviate hunger, to help with the irritation of intestinal parasites, for spiritual purposes, and for medical reasons. Education isn't very advanced in this country. Many children only go to school till their in 3rd grade. The majority of the kids that go to school have low literacy skills. There are more Ethiopian doctors in Chicago than there are in the country of Ethiopia. Not having enough doctors or nurses limits the treatments to help the many diseases that this country carries. HIV/AIDS are one of the biggest issues that Ethiopia has yet to conquer (Poverty and Health Care).

In 3 out of every 4 Ethiopian's is a farmer whether its between subsistence and rain-fed farming, or livestock production (Farm Africa).The farms are classified into two different groups there is small-holder farmers or large commercial farming (International Food Policy Research Institute). The majority of people are smallholder farmers. They usually only grow enough for their own consumption. Only a small amount is taken to the market for profit. Coffee is one of their major exports that they grow. They grow an abundant amount of cereals and pulses. Other crops that are grown in this country are; oilseeds, vegetables, root crops, fruits and cash crops (International Food Policy Research Institute).

Ethiopia has the largest livestock population in Africa. It is also has the tenth largest livestock population

in the world (Brighter Green). All the crops that they grow in this country rely on their animal population (Feed the Future). Livestock is used for many reasons. They use them for transportation, sources of milk, nutrition in times of drought, and they use the manure for fertilizer purposes (Brighter Green). The livestock that they raise include; herding cattle, goats, poultry, oxen, and camels. They raise these animals in cages, feedlots, and sometimes in factory-style dairy operations (Brighter Green). This country may have a large population now but it is still growing.

There are many things that keep Ethiopia from flourishing. One reason is the weather. The climate they live in is very dry. Their crops go through a lot of drought throughout the year. This makes it harder for them to grow enough just for themselves to eat. Another reason is the land gets overgrazed and over used by the farmers. This is also from the droughts the land goes through. The combination of these two factors creates a problem with the amount of feed for animals. This is one of the reasons why they don't have more commercial-farming. They are better off farming only little pieces of land at a time.

More than 30 million people live under the poverty line earning less than \$1.25 a day. The minimum age for wage labor is 14 years old (Ethiopia-Working Conditions). Many families have to depend on their children's contribution to ensure the survival of their household. Even with 2 minimum wage earners the family can only earn half the amount needed for their monthly expenses. Most people work more than one job and work many hours at all those jobs. Many people that live under the poverty line are farmers. They would be more successful with their farming if the country didn't have to worry about drought. Many of them lose their crops and livestock due to drought making them lose all their profit they were hoping to get out of it.

The people of this country are very undernourished. 1 in every 10 Ethiopians struggle with access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food for themselves and their families (The Ethiopian Approach to Food Security). Many people are undernourished because the food population is based off the crops that they grow. With the lack of clean water everything they eat is very unsanitary. Without the proper food preparation many children suffer from diarrhea and compromised growth (World Bank). Many farmers grow enough food for their families, and if they end up having a little bit of a surplus then it is taken to the markets to be sold.

Education is something that this country lacks. The poor education is a disadvantage for this country. This makes them fall behind other countries. The kids that are raised in Ethiopia more often than not think working is more important because the adults of the household need their children to work to make ends meet every month, and that usually isn't even enough. Many children don't go through more than 5 or 6 years of school. Most of them end up dropping out once they get to middle school because they can't keep up with the transition. Education systems have been struggling because to get a good education you must be rich to be able to attend private schools. If kids could have more schooling they would be able to learn more and put that into their everyday lives. If the schools had better supplies such as; books, pens, pencils and etc. The schools are also limited. Many rural children don't usually get the chance of going to school because they are too far away. They don't have the transportation needed to be able to get to school. Better education and more schools could lead to more rural families having a better chance at earning a living without sacrificing their children's livelihood.

One thing that comes right to your mind is you could help this country by building more schools or getting them transportation. Another option, instead of building more schools and having to spend money, is to have a school where a tutor comes in to teach the kids in a certain area. Saving money on transportation for students and buildings. This would give them one-on-one time with the teacher for about a half day a week. Getting the "tutor schools" books so that every child can have their own to keep at home with them is one way money would need to be spent. These teachers would have to be experts in agriculture this way they could teach the children better ways to do chores on the farm but are also strong

in other subjects that the children will need to know such as; reading, writing, and math. Teaching them what and how to feed their livestock. They could also teach them how to raise their own garden and show them what it takes to make a decent amount of crop when harvest season comes around. Having better education can really help the agricultural practices because on days the teacher isn't visiting students can help work on the family farm as well as do assignments the teacher has given them for the week. If the parents of the household know that their children will still be able to help on the farm will make them more willing to help their children get a better education. It would be more convenient for them if their children could be taught at home, that way they wouldn't have to worry about transportation or if they're going to get everything done on the farm. More schooling could equal more pay for many people. This could result to many farmers being able to afford better machinery making it easier to farm larger pieces of land at one time.

For this solution to work there is going to have to be someone to be in charge of everything. They will have to make sure the teachers all have a schedule to go by. It will be their job to figure out the time schedule they will go by. They will also have to make sure every child has their own supplies. It would be nice if everyone could have their own book, that way they won't have to share with their siblings. This plan is going to have to be very organized for it to work. Many of these teachers may have to start out as volunteers. This could make it hard to find teachers but this way the program can make some sort of funding for them eventually. The teachers will teach their skills that they have learned to the children of these households. They'll have to let this go on for a couple months, then the program can gradually grow. Like stated before the teachers will only spend about half a day each week with each household. This will give the children a chance to work on the farm, but also getting time to work on their assignments. A teacher could also stop in maybe a couple days only for 1-2 hours after they were given their new assignments just to see if the children had any questions and to make sure that they are working on them. To add a little more fun to this program it would be cool if mission trips could travel to Ethiopia. The kids that are on the trip could go around with the teachers and help with the different activities the teacher has planned. With the mission trips helping they could also help in the funding for "tutor schools". To start this program they will have to start out in only a small rural area to see the project will work.

Ethiopia country progresses very quickly. The people are willing to try new things that could be beneficial to their country. The government can also help put this into play by supporting their peoples education. The more things the people can learn, the more their country can progress. Ethiopians are hungry to learn, and this program can give them what they are hungry for. This program won't just teach them the basics, but will also teach them through hands on learning. Many children learn much faster if they can get their own two hands dirty learning. The children will hopefully feel like they are making a difference not only to their own lives but to the others around them. "Tutor schools" could give many children a brighter future than what they had imagined for themselves. It will give them hope that there is much more out there for their careers and lives.

One of the downfalls of this solution is that this country doesn't have much money to get teachers to come and travel to each child. Getting books and new supplies for every student wouldn't be cheap either, but American schools usually have some out of date textbooks that could be a real help to Ethiopian children if they were sent there. Another reason would be getting more teachers. If you have the teacher travel rather than build more schools then you would need more of them to teach at the "tutor schools" and someone to organize where the teachers were to travel to. There are many downfalls to this idea but I think it is something that really needs to be taken into consideration. "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world" (Nelson Mandela).

Buying books and new supplies is the first step that the "tutor schools" can take. It may be costly but it can be done. The government could help by donating some money, but the knowledge of funding issue within the country might make this a barrier for time and effectiveness of the program. The faster the

money gets raised the faster the “tutor schools” can start. One way to raise money is having some kind of fundraiser to get the whole community involved. This will get the kids excited for what is yet to come. Some schools could start their own market. They could have a school garden. Then when it was ready they could sell the vegetables that they had grown to the community. This would spread awareness throughout the community.

Another option for funding, is that the teacher could also let each student have an agriculture portion of learning in the classes and they could raise animals like poultry. The poultry would provide the family with some food, but also supply the “tutor school” with funding. Each week the teacher could pick up each students produce so they can sell the eggs and even the chickens to make a profit at the market, and all that money would be able to go towards the new books. Selling the eggs together like a coop type enterprise then would get the children a better price when they sell the eggs or meat at the market.

Lastly, the mission trips that will be coming to help serve students and families during the summer months could give in two ways. The first is they could bring books and supplies for the children to use that they are not using or will not use in the future from their homes and offices. This is a way to get the needed books, notebooks, pencils, ect. without having to purchase anything. The only cost would be to bring the supplies over with them to do their mission trips. The second way they could help is by adopting a child or family of children that they could sponsor monetarily for a year to get the teacher to come to their homes. They would simply donate the money to the family to be able to pay the teachers the needed salary to travel and serve the different families. This funding would not be available until the program is proven to be beneficial and feasible for the teachers as well as the students. So this would not be an options for the initial funding of the “tutor schools.” It will probably take a while to save enough money to start the schools but it can be done with time and plenty of sources of funding.

Books for Africa is a great organization that is all about helping countries in Africa get new textbooks and wanting kids to get an education. Books for Africa has donated over 3.3 million books to 49 different countries since 1988. They only send good books that can be used to a full classroom of children. This organization is managed mostly by volunteers that have the same goal in mind which is end book famine in Africa. It only takes about 50 cents to send a book from the United states to Africa. Mission trips can also help with the funding of this program. There are always people willing to donate money for an excellent cause. Unicef is another organization that would be willing to help. Unicef is located in New York in the US, but have 8 regional offices and 125 country offices. Ethiopia being one of them. They are focused on the well-being of children in all these countries. Mainly on education, health, and sanitation. They want what is best for all the children and are willing to do what it takes to do that. Many of the families could help at the markets or even give a little bit of their money. Even if it is a penny. Its a penny more than they had and a penny closer to the outcome of something that could be an amazing experience for their children.

Ethiopia is one of the largest populated countries in the world, but with many families under the poverty line. Clean water is a huge issue for most people with most Ethiopians walking miles for very unsanitary sources of water causing children and adults to be sick. Access to healthcare is a concern to most Ethiopians because the unbalance of availability between rural and urban residents. Most Ethiopian teens are required to work to help their families make money to pay bills and feed the whole family. Putting all these injustices aside getting the almost 50% illiterate population an education of some means is the solution to many of Ethiopia’s problems. If every child got the schooling they needed it would open so many doors for the country as a whole. Everyone would be more educated and would know more about the problems and solutions that this country needs.

Ethiopia is one of the number one progressing countries in the world. The solution that seems the easiest to help in this situation is to have traveling teachers that meet with students once a week and go over the

assignments for each week and questions they have on old assignments. Getting books and supplies for the classes would be tough, but there are organizations and people that will help get the books to the students helping with this challenge. If the donations ever became not enough then the “tutor schools” could start having student do fundraisers including raising chickens for eggs and meat to markets. Every teenager deserves to grow up and be able to read and write without supporting their family. It is so important that Ethiopia gets access to education to its whole population to increase it capabilities as a country. If all people in Ethiopia had all the right resources for farming, their health care, and their education it would be a nation of unstoppable potential in the world.

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