

Evan Larson
Ankeny Centennial High School
Ankeny, Iowa
Ethiopia, Education

Saving Ethiopia

Ethiopia is a country with all the potential in the world for prosperity, yet it is plagued with poverty. Governmental corruption, a lack of young people involved in solving problems, a marginalization of females from cultural bias, and illiteracy have precluded a solution to date. Education is the key activity to spur action which will mobilize youth, entrepreneurs, and women to help solve the problem. Affordable cell phones using new technology is a mechanism to accelerate education and mobilize communities. Start-up businesses are the other key area to create innovative solutions for deploying solutions. This momentum from scaled education, coupled with Ethiopia's natural resources and cultural riches, is a recipe for success.

Ethiopia is rich with natural resources including gold, potash, natural gas, copper, and platinum (AFRICAW, 2018). To complement this natural resource abundance, they have more than 9 rivers including the Nile, Omo, Raro, Awash, Tekeze, Shebelle, Angereb, and the Mereb. Despite these riches, the country is incredibly poor. At least 37 million Ethiopians are continuing to live in poverty and this problem needs to be solved.

Ethiopia is a country in the Eastern part of Africa. It shares borders with Somalia, Kenya, South Sudan, Sudan, and Djibouti. Currently, Ethiopia has a population of about 105 million. 80% of this population is rural and about 20% is urban. Ethiopia has one of the greatest population growth rates at 2.9% (Proquest, 2019). This shows the strong dependency that Ethiopia has on agriculture. Furthermore, the government in Ethiopia is based upon a Federal Democratic Republic. Ethiopia has a prime minister which has high executive authority. The country is further divided into nine ethnically based states and two self-governing states. Through all of these different factors, education decreases which further causes several different problems for this country. Each has its own parliament and council of ministers and is ultimately responsible to the federal government (Trading Economics, 2018). Therefore, Ethiopia is divided into these states and causes the country to fail. They need to come together and work as one to solve their problems.

Furthermore, in Ethiopia, agriculture is a prime profession and resource for this country. Ethiopia's main exports consist of agricultural foods. Additionally, Ethiopia has cultivated about 36.26% of the land according to the World Bank Collection of development. Its prime crops are pulses, oils, seeds, coffee, and grains. In Ethiopia, many families own farms. The average farm size is about .9 hectares which is about 2.22 acres. These farms are fairly small because of the self-resilience of family farms (Trading Economics, 2018).

Ethiopia is located in the Horn of Africa. It shares a border with 6 different countries. Due to its strategic location between the Middle East and Europe, they are a prime country to enhance international trade. This country also has a great geographical diversity. It has large, rugged mountains, plateaus, gorges, plains, and valleys. Ethiopia also has great altitudes with peaks up to 4620 meters above sea level depths to 148 meters below sea level. Furthermore, Ethiopia also has three prime climate groups which are tropical rainy, dry, and warm temperate rainy climate. The maximum mean temperatures are generally higher in March to May. The minimum mean

temperature is lowest generally during November and December. Secondly, rainfall varies in location. The northern part of Ethiopia receives about less than 100 mm of annual precipitation while the southern receives about 280 mm of 11.02 inches of annual precipitation (Government Portal of Ethiopia, 2016). Overall, Ethiopia has a diverse climate spectrum. Ethiopia is a country with many wonders but still has many challenges that need to be addressed.

Furthermore, Ethiopian family structure plays a large role in the hunger issue. Ethiopian family structure is strongly dependent on location. For all locations, a typical Ethiopian family has 5.4 children per family. In rural areas, there are generally three generations of family living together. The males in the family play a prime supporting role in the family. The families in rural areas consist of many members from extended family. This provides a beneficial purpose of providing social security. The males in the family have the responsibility of farming and then the land is divided among them when certain ages are reached. Overall, families have greater numbers which provides a strong social security and self-reliant life. Furthermore, in urban areas, families are more singular. Newlywed couples live on their own. Also, extended families live on their own as well. They all live in the same vicinity and visit often but the extended family does not play that large of impact live they do in rural areas. Also, with the new advancements in technology in urban areas, contact between people has become more efficient. Overall, families differentiate based upon location which cause a size difference (Proquest, 2019).

Ethiopian diets include millet, sorghum, and plantain. The diets include simple stews and porridges across all regions. They differ in ingredients due to agricultural variety by region. Diets also include animal proteins and high fiber content. Diets include fruits such as oranges, bananas, mangoes, papayas, avocados, grapes, tomatoes, and lemons. The most common vegetables are potatoes, beets, carrots, cabbage, spinach, and onions (Proquest, 2019).

The average salary of Ethiopia is \$16,464 and includes roles such as lecturers, doctors, managers, physicians, engineers, etc. In rural areas, there are many people in the agricultural sector and there is widespread poverty. Education and health care are very poor in this country. The corrupt government in this country does not help support the people which is a huge problem ("Average Salary Survey").

In Ethiopia, a major problem is the lack of access to education. Literacy rates for both genders are under 50%. The global average for both genders is 86%. Compared to the global average, the literacy rates in Ethiopia are very low. This is a huge struggle that this country faces. The lack of education creates fails to check corruption of the Ethiopian government. Because of this lack of education, people move to rural areas to find a more sustainable profession in agriculture. This is a prime reason why 80% of the Ethiopian population is rural. The natural disasters can destroy agricultural crops. These people have no social security because they reliant on agricultural. When this is disrupted, poverty and hunger occur. When these people are so uneducated, they do not have the ability to speak up to their corrupt government that takes advantage of them (Janes).

Education gaps and illiteracy have caused many major impacts in Ethiopia. When businesses are failing, poverty and hunger increase. According to *Trading Economics*, Ethiopia "According publishes UNESCO, an adult literacy rate of 39%. While the male literacy rate is 49.13%, for females is 28.92%, showing a big gap between the sexes." The literacy rates in this country are very low compared to many different countries. Due to these rates being so low, Ethiopia's economy has also fallen. Poverty increases with up to 37,000,000 people living in poverty, which is one of the highest rates globally.

The illiteracy in Ethiopia also creates more corruption in the government. This weak government is not taking any initiative to raise the literacy rates. Furthermore, the lack of education causes more people in Ethiopia to move into rural areas and find a profession in agriculture. More people go hungry in Ethiopia because of the lack of social security these people have due to the dependence on agriculture and problems that negatively affect their crops. The farmers are singularly dependent on their crops but when natural disasters occur such as drought, less crops are produced. This takes away these people's incomes and food sources because they have no back up plan or insurance. Overall, the low literacy rates contribute to the increasing hunger and poverty crisis. Furthermore, these trends are showing a slight increase due to a prime factor. Foreign countries are investing in Ethiopia and improvements have been shown. A Chinese investment has shown great improvements. The GDP has shown a significant growth of 10.6% compared to other countries such as Kenya and Rwanda who has shown half of that growth, Ethiopian leaders were very content with this foreign support. Also, the poverty rates in Ethiopia had decreased by 11%. This pleased many people and leaders because a new solution was proving beneficial. Overall, these foreign investments are a prime reason for these slight improvements (AFRICAW, 2018).

Secondly, there is a discrimination between men and women in this country. Men are the prime providers in families and provide more essential jobs in their economy. Therefore, they take priority over women and usually receive a better education than women. Also, the marginalized populations is another key problem in Ethiopia. This problem deals with the "systematic marginalization and persecution of certain ethnic groups caused mainly by poor government policies. The nationwide protests by the Oromo people, the single largest ethnic group in both Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa, is a clear example of the atmosphere this systematic marginalization and failed government policies have created in Ethiopia today. Unfortunately, Ethiopia's corrupt government and the international community fail to acknowledge the simple fact that Ethiopia is facing a crisis of unprecedented magnitude" (Trading Economics, 2018). Overall, the illiteracy in Ethiopia plays a factor in many different problems across the country.

Illiteracy and the resulting hunger problems can be solved with a multiple pronged approach. The solution begins with leveraging a new incubator. An incubator is an entrepreneurial environment that stimulates innovation through a network of mentors and suppliers to build small businesses. Then scale the incubator to improve literacy programs and to improve agricultural solutions that fight hunger. The model incubator is called BlueMoon. "In agriculture, a new incubator where youth can aspire to transform agribusiness is on the horizon. Our incubator, BlueMoon is Ethiopia's first youth agribusiness incubator. We discover, nurture, and invest in innovative, scalable, and transformational ideas to build the new Ethiopia, one dreamer at a time. Crazy is good" (Gabre-Madhin, 2018). The BlueMoon incubator is founded by foreign companies to try and help build up companies to create a more sophisticated country. To scale this incubator, the solutions requires substantially increasing the number of people focusing on the country's problems, improving the communication network between citizens, and avoiding government corruption.

Innovation is a powerful force in itself but together with the youth that drive it, it can have monumental impact. The solution will focus on literacy and hunger solving technology. Incubators have done well recently using emerging technology in social media and video games which we will focus on fighting illiteracy. The incubators will launch the companies that will build each piece of this solution. Agricultural solutions are just one way to combating the ongoing predicaments forming in this country (Gabre-Madhin, 2018).

To address illiteracy, communication tools like computers and cell phones are required. Unfortunately, the cost of these tools is prohibitively expensive. Luckily, there is a new innovation

from Bare Conductive which is called conductive paint. This conductive paint acts like a copper wire that “conducts” electricity. The paint literally acts like a wire on a circuit board. What this means is that circuit boards can be printed on a piece of paper or cardboard. The government can afford to give these to everyone and then anyone near a TV and an outlet could have a cell phone. Plug the cardboard phone into the outlet and connect with a cable jack to most TV’s and every citizen can have a cell phone for free which will accelerate literacy campaigns. These phones on papers also have capabilities to act as minicomputers.

This solution is different from efforts in the past because it calls multiple new groups to action and it connects them to a newly formed technology and physical infrastructure which can support the scale needed to solve these problems. Historically, government corruption has thwarted any progress made but undoing solutions for personal gain. The first step of this solution is to mobilize youth in numerous incubators to help solve the problems. Incubators and like the ones used for chickens where eggs sit under a warm light together so they can hatch. Incubators for business are a start-up trend where a bunch of entrepreneurs get together and launch businesses at the same time. These incubators are typically sponsored by businesses or nonprofits and coach the business owners on the best way to launch a business or set them up with mentors and technology to go faster. There is a good one called BlueMoon, and we want more of ones like that which we call scaling. This grows the number of young participants which represent about 25% of the population. The BlueMoon model demonstrates that once incubators are established, community leaders and businesses will participate and fuel the innovation with mentoring and pilot projects. These incubators launch start-ups from young people which are a new catalyzing energy for social change.

Then, we take the learning from the Surma culture where women are empowered and activated and scale that across other cultures to double the number of participants by activating women. The gender roles have clear definition in Ethiopia which is why if the women start being able to participate in their social societies, they can double the work force (Culture Atlas, 2019). Then, we focus on farmers using more self-initiative which activates about 80% of the population. As these solutions begin to take off through widespread innovation from these incubators, the infrastructure enhancements will sustain and expand the innovation growth. Recall these infrastructure investments were funded by the Chinese. Furthermore, the paper-based cell phones will allow participants to communicate with each other.

Finally, the gains from literacy efforts helps citizens to be empowered and avoid marginalization by the government. For farmers, focusing on self-initiatives would also give them the confidence to fight government corruption. Agriculture is a prime component in combating hunger. If a country has a successful agriculture, they can feed their nation. This is where these new incubated companies come in. They create processes and teachings that give farmers new methods and agricultural techniques. It also comes down to the farmers for taking this self-initiative to inform themselves in these teachings. Based on the families on farms, these teachings will last. Three generations live in the same house and this knowledge can be passed down. This is a new innovative way to create a solution to solve hunger issues and create a substantial timeline on this solution. “Expanding Ethiopia’s agricultural base is, perhaps, the most efficient way of reaching the population spread out over the country. In 2014, it was estimated that over 78 million people live in rural areas, while the remaining are concentrated in urban hubs. Providing better technology for food production and better infrastructure for distribution could be an ideal way to attack malnutrition” (Cassie, 2016). Ethiopia has one of the fastest growing populations in the world. This country already faces hunger and poverty, so solutions need to be initiated now and agriculture is a prime solution. It all starts with the educational process to teach these people to create food sustainability. Educated and self-initiated citizens will rise up to ensure government corruption is

in check and allow this program to succeed. The cell phones will create an alert network when any abuses surface so corrective actions can be taken immediately.

This multiple pronged approach for literacy and agricultural solutions will solve hunger since it leverages the creativity and passion of youth to innovate with literacy and agricultural technology solutions. It provides cell phones to all citizens at a very cheap cost with conductive paint one of the key tools needed to solve illiteracy. It scales an incubator model based on BlueMoon and broadens its impact by leveraging recent infrastructure improvements. It massively increases the number of people in the solution by mobilizing youth, women, farmers, and the previously uneducated. Finally, the empowered and educated people can keep the government in check and use it as a partner to help the program succeed.

This is an innovative and realistic solution that should be considered since we could save the lives of millions of people that die annually from starvation. If successful, the solutions that emerge from these efforts will help fight hunger around the globe. Unfortunately, hunger often causes social unrest and political unrest so the value of these efforts will have substantial value. Overall, Ethiopia has the potential for greatness, and it all starts with education.

Works Cited

"Average Salary Survey." *Ethiopia*, 11 Feb. 2019, www.averagesalarysurvey.com/Ethiopia.

Cassie, Bilen. "Top 10 Living Conditions about Ethiopia." *The Borgen Project*, 18 Sept. 2016, borgenproject.org/top-10-facts-about-living-conditions-in-ethiopia/.

"Ethiopia." *Trading Economics*, July 2018, tradingeconomics.com/ethiopia/indicators.

"Ethiopian Culture." *Culture Atlas*, 2019, culturalatlas.sbs.com.au/ethiopian-culture/family-353e2687-d0f3-4c22-85b9-63885b68b42c

"Ethiopia Family." *CultureGrams Online Edition*, ProQuest, 2019, online.culturegrams.com/world/

GABRE-MADHIN, ELENI Z. "Where Do Crazy Ideas Go in Ethiopia?" *Bluemoon*, 19 Dec. 2018, www.bluemoonethiopia.com/where-do-crazy-ideas-go-in-ethiopia/.

Government Portal of Ethiopia. 2016, www.ethiopia.gov.et/geography.

Janes, Helen. "STRUGGLING TOWARDS LITERACY IN WAR-TORN ETHIOPIA." *California State University*, chora.virtualave.net/freireethiopia.html.

"Major problems facing Ethiopia today." *AFRICAW*, 2018, www.africaw.com/major-problems-facing-ethiopia-today.