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 Malawi, Factor 16: Education

A Pebble in Malawi

Have you ever dropped a pebble into water? When the pebble hits the water what is created? The water creates a ripple effect that continues to go out further and further. This is the same type of idea happening with Malawi, Africa within the education system. Education is the main source of moving forward in any situation. Without a good education system, a person or a country is not going to better themselves. A community is going to have hard times when there is no educated leader to guide the members.

The African country of Malawi received its independence in 1964. (Raising Malawi) The population is currently over 16 million people. (Raising Malawi) The men to women ratio is about 50:50. (Raising Malawi) There are over 1.4 million orphaned and vulnerable children in Malawi. (Raising Malawi) With such a large population in such a small space, leaders must find a way to pull each and every family together to have a community that is willing to help each other out. The government needs to take a step to help each local communities because without a leader no one will follow. Sam Walton once said “Outstanding leaders go out of their way to boost the self-esteem of their personnel. If people believe in themselves, it's amazing what they can accomplish.” (BrainyQuotes) Not just Malawi, but all around the world we need outstanding leaders to move this world forward.

Throughout the environment of the schools, many children find it unsafe. Only 20% percent of the children at public education have access to furniture, like desks. (UNICEF) Most classrooms are outside, so if it rains they do not have class. In my hometown of Toledo, Iowa, the students here would be so excited not to have school, yet there are kids that want to have an education to better themselves. During harvest, the boys are often taken out of class. There are so little agriculture crops in Malawi that all the families must harvest what they can, when they can. Teachers do not have much, if any drive for the children’s education. The female teachers often refuse to travel to the rural areas to teach, because they are afraid that something may happen to themselves. (Engage for Education) The classrooms have diseases running through them like Usain Bolt running the 100 meter dash. Boys and girls share the same restroom facilities. The teacher to student ratio is one to one hundred and seven. (UNICEF) With such a large ratio, no teacher is going to be able to meet every need a student has to be the best of who they are.

The relationship between girls and school is very hostile. Girls tend to starts their education at a much later age than boys. Boys tend to start school at age six while girls begin school around the age eight. (Engage for Education) In the public education areas, inequality is a major issue. Parents tend push their daughters towards marriage rather than getting an education. If girls do go into the education system, they will most likely drop out by fifth grade. (UNICEF) When the children drop out at such an early stage in their life, the country will soon become illiterate. In the United States, a high school diploma is the first thing a child is pushed to receive. Just like their parents, the children aren’t going to finish their education which will only hurt Malawi in the long run. “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world,” stated Nelson Mandela. (BrainyQuotes) Only 16% of girls will complete their education, compared to 26% for boys. (UNICEF) If you add that together, only 42% of the children in Malawi are completing their education. That is less than half of the population having the knowledge of how to grow the country. It only takes one person to get hundreds to follow. Once a person starts a chain reaction of finishing the entire education system, more will follow. The more people with an education the better. A quarter of the entire population in Malawi will repeat at least one grade, if not more than two grades. (UNICEF)

The education pebble was dropped into water. Education plays a role in everyday life. If an area has issues within the education, more than likely they have other issues. Malawi's technology is on the low end of updated technology. In the medical field, technology is used every day for new ways to solve problems. Education is a must if you use technology or want to advance your country's opportunities. The education you receive can be used to make the new technology. Without a good education, how are you going to improve the technology within Malawi? The internet is almost inaccessible in Malawi. (Malawi) There are institutes trying to make the internet possible in the most remote areas. The transportation technology is also in desperate need of help. Pick-up trucks are the main transportation on the public roads of Malawi. Education needs to be improved in order to get help within the technology aspect in Malawi. The education pebble has been dropped and the technology ripple has been created. What will be the next ripple?

Only one in ten families have access to electricity. (Climate) Without electricity how does a person connect with the rest of the world? How can a person improve their own country's education without seeing what others have? For starters, in America 53% of children receive their first phone by the age of six. (STUDY) This may be a little early in my opinion, but they are the next generation to lead the countries and world. Now, in Malawi, if we could get governments to work together and start to incorporate computers into the school systems, the kids would be eager to use it. When kids start out an early age using technology, they will constantly be able to connect with others using social media and internet.

In Malawi there is no universal language for everyone to speak. The Malawians communicate in different languages such as, Chichewa, Chinyanja, Chiyao, Chilomwe, and many more. Chichewa is understood by 52.7% of the population. (UNICEF) If all the schools taught one main language, would the education be easier for children that speak a different language than their teachers? If everyone spoke the same language then education would become more understandable to all the children. Most people live in rural communities and that community has one set language. Most occupations are farming because there are few to little jobs within the cities. On the side of farming, the people of Malawi often handcraft wood carvings. They make the items to sell at markets and tools for themselves. The economy of Malawi revolves around agriculture. Trade brings in over 80% of the economy. (Malawi) The main trading items are tobacco, tea, sugar, coffee, and cotton. If Malawi didn't have agriculture, they would not have much of an economy.

The country of Malawi sits along a rift in the tectonic plates. Due to this there has been multiple earthquakes. Within the country, there are rolling grasslands, heavily wooded hills, wetlands, and great areas to grow crops. When an earthquake occurs, the geography of the country is damaged enough where the crops are ruined. Along with earthquakes, Malawi has extreme rainy season and extremely dry seasons. (Malawi) The hot wet season is through the months of December to April. (Malawi) Over 95% of the nation's rainfall occurs during this time. (Malawi) Temperatures may reach up into the 30°C. Generally floods are often through these months. Next comes the cool dry season from May to August. Here, temperatures may go as low as 5°C. From September to November is considered the hot dry season. At this time temperatures range from 16°C to 38°C. (Malawi) With such a wide range of weather and temperatures, crops must be grown quickly in order to receive the largest amount possible. From earthquakes, floods, and droughts, Malawians must know what to plant, when to plant, and how to plant.

If we hold a meeting space to discuss what others are doing within Malawi some may take new ideas home to use. Once a month, all year round, meetings would be held. Also at this time a leader can provide information and new ideas to all the families. If families start to struggle, the leader(s) could go out to their homes to give the family more ideas or show new techniques that might possibly work.

Another ripple caused by the education pebble is health care. Health concerns are a major issue in any third world countries. If health care equipment is inadequate to cure the problems, then the problems are always going to exist. When a person does not have an education, how would a person make equipment that will work? Doctors from other countries can go to Malawi or a third world country to help, but this may be hard on doctors' families when they travel outside of the country. Therefore the doctors' services are delivered on a short term basis. If the education in Malawi was to improve, they could have their own doctors from their home country. When children drop out by fifth grade, they have basically no chance to reach their full potential without traveling in search of education.

Transmitted diseases are a huge concern when there are few doctors to assist. AIDS is the biggest cause of death in Malawi. According to the 2007 census, over 900,000 people have HIV/AIDS and 84,000 people died because of it. Other death causing illnesses would be the typhoid fever, hepatitis A, and protozoan diarrhea. The average life expectancy for males is 43.95 years. Female life expectancy is around 42.61 years old. (UNICEF) On average, each woman has five to six children. For every 1,000 live births, there are about 92 infant deaths. The death rate is around 18.25%. (UNICEF) When the educational system is in a better state, the people will survive longer with having the knowledge of how to survive.

To fix the poverty, health conditions, and education systems within Malawi is not going to be quick and easy. First thing is first, the education system. We do not want to just invade, therefore we can train a group of leaders to take the techniques back to their villages. At the same time we will have one big building where everyone can come and learn how to use the resources they have in their area to make a profit and or use in their own homes. Also, we would teach the Malawians how to manage their finances while making this user friendly. At these meetings, they would be held on a monthly basis and there would be a community garden where if you come to a meeting you can take so much home based on your attendance. Within the meetings we would begin to introduce technology and work this in to the Malawians everyday lives. This will help Malawi stay in touch with the rest of the world's trends in imports and exports. This all starts with the education of how to grow as a person and country.

One pebble can create multiple ripples. Without a good education system, how many ripples are going to be created after one drop the education pebble? A poor education does affect the entire country in many ways. The education system won't be successful without the teachers having a great education themselves and a safe environment for a school. A bully-free zone is nearly impossible, but the harassment needs to be cut down to virtually nothing. Girls should feel that they are equal to the boys in all ways. The boys and girls should be pushed to complete their entire education system over marriage. Health concerns are not improving without the education and technology. Let's start helping Malawians education system, so they entire country can help itself. How many ripples can the education pebble create?

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