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Small Rwandan Farms Have Potential to Impact the World

“If you desire peace, cultivate justice, but at the same time cultivate the fields to produce more bread; otherwise there will be no peace”, - Norman Borlaug. This could be a feasible solution for the issues in Rwandan society. Rwanda is a country in east-central Africa located between the countries of Dominican Republic of the Congo and Tanzania. It has often been referred as a ‘tropical Switzerland in the heart of Africa’, (Rwanda). Rwanda was under Belgium rule until they gained their independence in 1962. Rwanda is home to several million people and composed of three ethnic groups: Hutu (85%), Tutsi (14%), and Twa (1%), (United). The Hutu ethnic group was traditionally crop growers and for many centuries Rwanda’s terrain attracted the North African ethnic group of herdsmen called the Tutsis. For six hundred years the two groups formed a close relationship as they shared their culture, language, and nationality as well as the business of farming which was the essential for survival. Since the genocide of 1994, Rwandan population had taken a large downfall but now well on the way to recovery, currently inhabits seven million people. Even though the genocide lasted as little as one hundred days, it resulted in over 800,000 deaths, majority being of the male gender. In the after effects, the Rwandan population is made up of seventy percent females. Cultural discrimination followed by instances of gender discrimination play a large role in the economic advancements and production rates of the country. Originating from way back in the early 1900’s the Tutsi ethnic group was classified as the upper class because of their position as cattle owners. The Hutu have been generalized as farmers and peasants from the early stages based solely on physicality and preference of the early Belgian settlers who established the differentiation of class levels between the Hutu and Tutsi. The Property rights are controlled by the government and are limited as the government of Rwanda is constantly in a battle for power between the two ethnic groups.

There are vast differences between the urban and rural populations of Rwanda. The urban populations have far better living environments with housing facilities made out of brick with sturdy metal roofs and electricity. The rural inhabitants, eighty percent of the total population, live in unsuitable situations. Their houses consist of mud or sod walls and mud floors with a cloth hanging over an entry way to serve as a door. The houses have no electricity, water, or indoor plumbing. The typical subsistence farm family of Rwanda consists of a father, mother, and a maximum of three children which is a government regulation that took effect in 2007. Their usual diet is composed of beans, plantains, white potatoes, and corn. They rarely eat meat as the prices are unaffordable. The country of Rwanda has set forth an equal opportunity educational system with their mission statement: “To combat ignorance and illiteracy.” They offer all the core classes as well as French and English as the national languages. The country also has secondary and university level education available. All Rwandans are granted the opportunity to have an education through the first six years of primary school. However; only forty eight percent of Rwandan children attend school because the expenses are too high. Statistics show that a majority of the rural population cannot read or write, which is an issue for the country as over three fourths of the population is rural. The access to health care is debatably medium to low quality. Rwandans face the crisis of HIV/AIDS, Malaria, Tuberculosis, and other child diseases. The health care is very limited with one doctor for every 50,000 people and one nurse for every 3,400 people. Only seventeen percent of nurses are aiding the rural populations and many Rwandans do not survive such diseases as a result of lack of medical professionals and treatments. The average farm size of a Rwandan family is ½ hectare which is equivalent to approximately one acre. The most dominant crops are tea and coffee as the geography of the land is mountainous and consists of steep slopes.

They also grow all of their corn, beans, potatoes, and other basic foods in an effort to meet their needs. With an annual average rainfall of thirty one inches, many of the basic survival needs are not easily obtained because the people have to manually irrigate their water supply from the nearest body of water. This also leads to problems in health care as the supply of water is limited and has to be used for all domestic needs and many cases of cholera have been confirmed. The men of the house try to migrate to urban areas in search of work to support their family but this is a difficult task in that the majority of men in search are of the Hutu tribe and with the Tutsi in governmental power they are faced with immense segregation in the job market. The women of the farms choose to stay and tend the crops for no pay in hopes that they will be able to survive if the men are unable to find employment. The Rwandans are unable to obtain a substantial amount of profit which as a result prevents them from affording to produce a surplus of crops for marketing opportunities. The governmental issues prevent foreign trade interests as seen in the comparison of 963 million dollars in imported goods to only 193 million dollars in exports. The imports are necessities from food to industrial aid such as the U.S. supporting their supply of electricity which is based on water movement and can be scarce as the water levels fall. Government reformation and coming to mutual agreements between the two main tribes of Hutu and Tutsi people would help them produce many more exports.

The cultural discrimination throughout the country reduces feasibility for survival in eighty percent of the population dependent on agricultural success. A vast majority of these farmers are of the Hutu tribe and are inferior to the government. The regulations set as laws make it nearly impossible for the farmers to produce enough food in the small plot of ½ hectare permitted by the government to make an efficient amount of money to continue to plant the crops and supply water to enable the crops to survive. The rural population is also at a great disadvantage in education which ties back to insufficient crop production that provides little income and makes educational opportunities unaffordable. This effect carries into the job market where the farmers do not have proper education to be eligible for the position and they have no way to support their families or provide food with long term effects leading to malnutrition. Due to governmental unrest, the future food security of the country is becoming a greater issue.

The trends of the cultural discrimination seem to worsen as statistics show that the population of Rwanda has quadrupled from proceeding the genocide of 1994 to present day. The most pressing social problem in Rwanda today is ethnic conflict. Restoring the country after the violence of 1994 has been a difficult task. In the final weeks of 1996, hundreds of thousands of Hutu returned to Rwanda from refugee camps in Tanzania and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, (Rwanda). Differences between rich and poor have widened the country's ethnic divisions. Poor rural youths migrate to cities but often cannot find jobs. They then turn to crime or get involved in terrorist activities. As the growth of population becomes more rapid, it is evident to see the measurement of the issue is rising because the production of food is not increasing with the number of inhabitants. Presently, the agricultural rate is at 36.4% GDP and decreasing. The inequality of rural population and hunger poverty with lack of sufficient amounts of food is growing on a larger scale with the growth of the Hutu ethnic group included in the population.

By resolving the cultural discrimination and allowing the Hutu to hold power in the government, it would drop the poverty rate drastically. The Hutu would not only be able to tend more governed hectares to yield more crops but also have easier access to water supplies as they would be of importance in society and their uses of the water would be a prime necessity . They would also have equal opportunities to education as the income rate would increase. As the segregation decreased the rural poverty environments would decrease as well. The rural families would have the ability to obtain the qualifications to succeed in the industrial workforce and have better living environments. The migration to the urban regions would allow the farmers to adopt the abandoned

land and produce a larger amount of their crop resulting in a surplus and a higher export percentage that would positively affect the country in its economic standpoint.

Rwandan society could potentially be on the verge of economic issues between the Hutu and Tutsi ethnic groups once more as any major change such as climate or urbanization could cause a drastic downward fall for the country. If the vast change in rapid urbanization were to occur that would only be as a result of migration from the farm lands. This causes twice the amount of issues because the urban areas become too densely populated which leads to poverty and the farms would be abandoned which then leads to a lack of food security. The climate change would also hurt the Rwandans as eighty percent of their population is agriculturally related. They currently do not have a surplus of crops for marketing and if the climate were to change and impact the crops it would be cutting into their personal intake and would also lead to lack of food security. The Hutu tribe, the general rural population, should come together and demand a say in government to help stop the risk of poverty as a result of urbanization. With governmental power they would have a reliant in assurance that they would be provided with adequate qualifications to find employment in the instance of urbanization and eliminate the possibility of living on the streets. As the possibility of climate change can impact the many farmers, with the authority to send requests for the necessary supplies the Rwandan farmers can defeat the change in climate by securing the crops with proper fertilizers purchased with government funds.

To improve the gender and cultural discrimination in Rwanda the initial step is enabling the Hutu to hold position in government. The Hutu make up the eighty percent of the farming community and clearly deserve a voice in the government because without food the Rwandans have no life. They know the necessities of agricultural success and it is crucial for the country to achieve such. Rwanda needs a balance of power through out every organization. Just as the United States has the Affirmative Action policy which provides a requirement of a minimum amount of cultural diversity within the workplace, Rwanda needs to establish a similar policy for both governmental and nongovernmental places of employment. An organization similar to the International Heifer Institute would also be an excellent way to help the Rwandan society establish a reliable source of safety and food supply. The Heifer Institute is an organization that donates a heifer to a family in need and that family is required to pass the first born calf on to another family. As this process continues, eventually numerous amounts of people will have milk and meat provided by the cows and have a reliable first hand food supply. The Rwandan people could combine an idea such as that with the method of Norman Borlaug and the green wheat. Dr. Borlaug established farming areas throughout Mexico and taught the natives how to plant the green wheat which now is a major factor in their food security. The Rwandan population is oblivious to outside industrialization and agricultural success in other countries. Being provided with assistance from another country and shown how to plant in a more practical way, such as the mission of the Heifer Institute and Dr. Borlaug, the Rwandans would have a knowledge of how to successfully plant and maintain the crops which enables them to plant larger quantities to provide a surplus and raise the export rates of the country, directly affecting the growth of the economy as a whole. The knowledge would then have the capability of being passed down through the generations for agricultural success for years to come.

The involvement of any external organizations is quintessential to the Rwandan society. The inhabitants are in desperate need of aid in governmental development as well as establishing a balance of power between the two ethnic groups. In the Rwandan genocide of 1994 the UN held a great amount of affiliation internally in the civil war. The government of the UN could organize a program to help Rwanda establish a stable economy as they were a large contributor in resolving the previous conflicts between the Hutu and Tutsi ethnic groups. The Rwandans are very naïve and have limited knowledge of how the country should base their system simply because they

have little connection with other nations and have nothing to compare with their current state in industrial advancements. The best thing for the World Bank and other funding organizations to contribute is designated funding for specific materials needed to help them prosper. The society of Rwanda is in a position of no hope for peace between the Hutu and the Tutsi tribes. Based on research of first hand documentation of the average lifestyle, the best way for a balance of power to be established would involve external regulating systems of government to enter Rwanda and establish a stable government system for the country. With a balance of power it would resolve numerous issues from the small holders on the farms to the issues socially and economically in urban areas.

Rwandan society has potential to be successful and rise up to become an essential country in the success of our world. The only barrier preventing this from becoming a reality is the internal conflicts between the two different ethnic groups that inhabit it. This can be resolved by a mandatory balance of power which is something of feasibility. By taking it to the farmer, success lies at the fingertips of the Rwandan people. The impact the improvement of crop production could make in the entire country is unimaginable. The country is much less developed compared to the systems we have in the United States. However; to Rwandans the need is as simple as an assurance they are going to have the adequate funds to survive through the next year. The key necessity is to assist the Government of Rwanda implement the aid coordination, harmonization, and alignment framework through informational exchange and dissemination from our nation to theirs. With success at the farming level, it would enable the people to have enough to sell and obtain enough money to provide education for the children of the farming community so generations to come would have the opportunity to be eligible for employment in a competitive job market. As the Tutsi controlled government continues to possess superior rule over the country shared by the Hutu group, they do not realize the advantages of allowing the Hutu people to coincide them in power. It would not only help the economy of the country but also the average intelligence of a Rwandan as the competition for success rises with the increased number of educated people. This also improves the chances of Rwanda becoming a world power with the government having people of two different backgrounds come together and provide the best decisions to accommodate every individual under the government.

“There are genuinely sufficient resources in the world to ensure that no one, nowhere, at no time, should go hungry”. -- Ed Asner

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