

Nathan Pech
Starmont High School
Arlington, IA
Ethiopia, Factor 2

Underdeveloped Agriculture

So what keeps a country from growing, developing, and becoming prosperous? There are many factors keeping Ethiopia from progressing into a viable country in Africa. With malnutrition, drought conditions, lack of sufficient government support, and poor agricultural practices, the people of Ethiopia are struggling to end the continuum of devastation. With 85 percent of the labor force employed in agriculture, it is not hard to understand why Ethiopia is under extreme financial hardship. Because the land is owned by the state, the people are unable to use land as collateral to secure a loan. These loans could provide equipment and education needed to improve the farming practices required to replenish the soils and produce a profitable crop. This country is truly being stifled by their own government's strong hand on exports, insufficient management of lease agreements, and lack of local support. There is one element that is beyond control and that is the climate conditions. A horrific drought in 1969 brought devastation to the rich farm land of Ethiopia. By 1973, three hundred thousand peasants had died and several thousands more moved to neighboring countries in search of food. Five years is how long it took for the government to aid in famine relief. The military forces tried to make a difference but the devastation was too great. The Ethiopians live directly off the land and for this to be taken away left them starving and in search of a better place. Limited arable land due to soil erosion and other natural factors make it very difficult to prevent a spreading famine. Contributing to the resistance of land redistribution and other farming improvements is the association that generations have with inherited land. This relationship is also seen in more developed countries as unproductive farms are handed down from our ancestors.

Malnourishment is a broad term which refers to both under nutrition and over nutrition. Individuals are malnourished, or suffer from under nutrition if their diet does not provide them with adequate calories and protein for maintenance and growth, or cannot fully utilize the food they eat due to illness. According to the World Health Organization, malnutrition is the gravest single threat to global public health (Medical News Today). On top of the malnourishment that a great number of Ethiopians suffer from, there is also a lack of some basic medical attention that could save thousands of lives. Simple vaccines and medications could treat or prevent meningitis, hepatitis, bacteria viruses and rabies which are highly prevalent in this area. Due to the poor living conditions and lack of medical attention, the general life expectancy is a young 55.41 years of age. The females tend to live longer lives, living to an expected 57.97 years, and the men up to 52.92 years. Lack of proper nourishment prevents the strength that is required to work and provide adequate provisions for a family. With 46 percent of the total population declared undernourished, the global hunger index is extremely alarming. With a fertility rate of six children per woman, providing food and proper care is difficult to achieve. It takes a rate of two children to maintain a steady population growth. An increase in population, a decrease in agricultural production, and the threat of famine makes life a constant struggle for an already failing economy.

Agriculture has extreme potential in Ethiopia due to its rich fertile land, a diverse climate, and generally adequate rainfall. Due to the 1970's drought, the land has remained underdeveloped. The drought also exacerbated the country's poor economy, low productivity, weak infrastructure, and a lowering level in technological advances. Approximately one million died during the famine of 1984 – 1986. Throughout these years of hardship, the agricultural production dropped

2.1 percent annually, and population grew 2.4 percent annually. During the Imperial period, most of the land belonged to the Aristocrats and the churches. The tenants who chose to farm this land had to pay fifty percent of their crops as rent leaving them with very little for themselves, once again creating an extreme hardship. Over the past two years, 50 million acres of African farm land has been leased to foreigners from the Middle East and Asia for up to 99 years. The land is cheap to lease from the government and very fertile in areas. Much of the produce raised on these farms is intended for markets in rich countries and will not furnish the needs of the local people and workers. The government is selective in the companies they lease to which in turn is taking away farms that have been in the families for centuries. By 2013, 3m hectares of land is expected to be leased by the government to outside investors. There are mixed emotions among the locals as they appreciate the jobs, but understand they have lost certain rights. One of the largest leased farms by outside investors is 75 miles wide, far from the one to two acre plots known to subsistent farmers. In recent years two billion ton of top soil has washed away due to improper restoration. The restoration efforts by local famers have had a contagious effect on neighboring farms as one tries to outdo the other. Global attention given to Ethiopia during the famine has prompted local and outside resources to educate and supply the necessary tools to advance the lifestyles for Ethiopians. There is still much room for growth and development as the rural areas struggle to maintain and develop infrastructure to allow for these much needed advances. MERET-PLUS and the United Nations World Food Program have come together to help stop the soil erosion. Dozens of seedling nurseries have sprouted up in Ethiopia. The farmers plant rows of the seedlings, later developing into fruit bearing trees. A profit is now available in the markets for the fruit along with a new source of food and nutrients. Ponds and retaining walls have also been established to capture the rain water, therefore, providing the opportunity for the soil to rehydrate. The MERET-PLUS program also pays the farmers in grain if they compost and replace nutrients into the soil. The daily wages earned on a commercial farm is well below a dollar a day, hardly enough to improve their poverty. The subsistence farmers were promised roads, schools, and water for the permission to use their land. The company only destroyed the farmland with their equipment.

Food is scarce in rural Ethiopia where the ground is parched with 5.2 million in desperate need of emergency food aid. This hunger crisis also impacts many of the refugees inside the borders of Ethiopia. Located in the eastern corner of the country, some forty four thousand refugees are scattered among four refugee camps. The families survive on as little as one meal a day. Humanitarian aid is provided to meet the basic needs of many of the refugees. Depending on the family's conditions, food rations are commonly traded for goods such as medicine, school clothes, or firewood for cooking. Many women are forced to work in the city as live-in domestic servants. This is very dangerous work and without protection from their families or the law many of the women experience sexual harassment and verbal abuse. Without any other option for money, they are forced to be mistreated. Many of the teenage girls stay in the home they serve for and return to their refugee camp once a week to deliver their pay and pick up food rations from their struggling family. The Ethiopians diet consists of what they are able to produce. Beef, goat, and lamb are used in stews as well as a spiced raw meat. Cereal grains and breads are a good source of nourishment.

There is a domino effect of devastation in this country when you reflect on the many areas that account for their devastation. Drought leads to poor farming practices which in turn lead to poor production and livestock searching for food which leads to border conflicts and water right battles. These battles then lead to loss of lives and further corruption. In some parts of Ethiopia the families earn less than \$100 per year. Though there are lush and fertile soils in some areas, the need for proper management and technology is crucial for their future. Some world organization groups are working with the people to show them how to build terraces and damns

to protect themselves against the hard rains that can leave gullies so big that it in turn leaves them stranded and with washed away crops. A nongovernmental organization known as Sasakawa-Global 2000 was developed in 1986 and began working to better the agricultural production in sub-Saharan Africa. Witness to inefficient farming techniques prompted intervention with the African research centers, rural farmers, and the government. To implement new farming strategies, farmers were shown the variables and controls of the new farming practices to show the substantial difference. Using a two acre field the farmer used the traditional farming techniques on half the land while new practices were applied to the other. Implementing simple practices that are used every day in modern agriculture made substantial differences for the uneducated farmers. The enrolment rate for high school education is 12 percent and lower in target areas. There is a large imbalance between rural and urban education. It is crucial that the importance of education is stressed to all Ethiopians to enable them to succeed and improve their situation. The simple techniques introduced to the farmers showed a 200 to 400 percent increase. With this visible change, farmers soon joined with great enthusiasm. After sixteen years of implementing these strategies through the Sasakawa-Global 2000 program it has been proven that a plentiful supply is possible with the proper education.

Food insecurity is linked to several factors in Ethiopia. Climate conditions, land degradation, and poor infrastructure all play a role in the ability to produce, process, and distribute food to the people. Since 85 percent of the area is rural, many Ethiopians live off of the land and do not have enough resources to produce more than they consume.

A global economic downturn has resulted in low coffee prices. Since this is a major commodity for Ethiopia, the impact has in turn made a change in their farming practice. A product called qat has taken the place of many coffee farms in hopes for a profitable return on their investment. This commodity is a green leafy shrub that is used to make a tea which has a mild narcotic effect. The loose, volcanic soil is ideal for qat production. Even though this commodity is highly lucrative, it is viewed as a narcotic and organizations providing assistance do not encourage its production. The government in Ethiopia maintains total control of the exports and pricing. Incentives are given to farmers to replace the qat crop with coffee. Even Starbucks has pledged to promote the very popular coffees of Ethiopia in an attempt to encourage a profit for the farmers.

Perhaps three quarters of Ethiopia's population do not have easy access to clean drinking water. Water points have been established for rural usage. If traveling far is needed the chances of getting adequate supply diminishes. Obviously, the further they travel the weaker they become, and it befalls to a survival of the fittest. Pregnant women would often miscarry during a long journey. Ownership in the development in the water points is crucial in the continued success in daily operation. Even if this ownership is manual labor to complete the task, the workers will develop a sense of the functionality. Sometimes outside organizations can establish rational thinking when it comes to water right implications. Education regarding terraces, dams, soil erosion, and irrigation will help the rural Ethiopians become more sufficient in providing adequate food and pasture. A farmer's wealth is often determined by the number of cattle or other livestock owned. Many times this may be as few as two head of cattle leaving the farmer with little collateral.

Ethiopia has an estimated two million people living with HIV/Aids. With the lack of knowledge and medical attention, 67,000 people will perish and 650,000 children will become orphans after losing their parents due to Aids. Clinics have been established for testing and education for the infection, along with treating pregnant women to prevent the transfer of HIV to the baby.

Rural Ethiopia has struggled for years with the economy. The government's eyes have been focused on their own profitability rather than the common interest of the people. With so much control of its citizens, the government could alter its views and support aid to the starving country, creating a substantial impact. Collaboration between all of the stakeholders is essential for future success. Global partnerships will provide aide and technology to better the agricultural production, but communication and a proper plan of action is essential for continued achievement. Struggling farmers will have to desire the possible benefits of the new practices. Dramatic changes in their daily lifestyles may be hard to accept. The history and memories of their ancestors will be tainted as a more modern and efficient system is put into place. Studies have shown that the modern practices will offer higher profits with less manual labor. Farmers have responded very well to the modernization showing a 200 to 400 percent increase in yields. Larger companies leasing land from the government have provided jobs for many, but their intentions are not always serving the best interests of the people. Lease agreements between larger companies and the government are unjust. Land ownership for Ethiopians would establish a sense of worth and fulfillment for a downtrodden society. The people feel as if the government has abandoned them resorting to a feeling of displacement. A general education informing them about infectious diseases will prevent future outbreaks and severity. Mother Nature provides essentials that could be harnessed with proper technology. Ethiopians are hard working, and dedicated people with a strong sense of family. These characteristics provide them with the basis of success.

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