

Jorge Del'Angel
Alabama School of Mathematics and Science
Mobile, Alabama
Ethiopia, Factor 16: Education

Ethiopia: Teaching them how they can do things the new and improved way

Ethiopia, located on the east side of Africa, has already come across most people's mind as just some other place in what is generally known as a “third world country.” In part, this is true because even though things may be going well in the major cities, it is the poor rural areas that need attending to. It makes no sense for one portion of a country to be productive while another is barely able to support themselves. The agriculture of rural Ethiopia is nowhere near up to par with that of the United States of America. Also, there are other advancements that need to happen but aren't able to happen since the people of Ethiopia aren't well educated in modern machinery and science. The families in this country and the people trying to promote the wellbeing of this country must understand that education must come to light as the upmost importance and that it should stand above all else. Education is key and without it, how can tasks be done without the knowledge of how to do it? There are different ways to address the social problems of Ethiopia and make it a better place. My solution is just to educate the people and try to show them how to make their land a greater “first world” country.

An Ethiopian family, on average, consists of 4-5 children living in the household. There are some homes that house their unmarried family members, such as unmarried uncles and aunts. With this huge family/inhabitant number, meals usually need to be big so all can eat. A “side” dish that is almost always eaten with every meal is enjera. Enjera is “a spongy flatbread” made of tef. Tef is one of the main staple crops of the country, and other staple grain crops include barley and emmer wheat. The growing and harvesting of these foods is tedious. For example, tef is a smaller grain that is grown by rural families and farmers. Many just “take a handful and throw it on soil” and during harvest season some gets left behind. The reason behind the people of rural Ethiopia doing this is because of the lack of education. Even though Ethiopia has made improvements in education, education is not being well-g geared toward the students. The school system of Ethiopia is based off of Christian beliefs and is usually run by the Orthodox Church. In these schools, an average class has sixty five students for every one teacher. To make matters worse, many of the necessities of the classroom such as pens, books, and paper aren't available. Many students drop out of school because of these shortages which restrains them to expand their knowledge. These same drop out students usually go to work to help provide for their family. Child labor begins at 14 years old which is good for those ready for a full, 7 hour work day. To keep these students in school, there should be more resources available to them because as stated earlier, they drop out because the lack of supplies needed for their education. Also, if the students' parents see how important it is to learn then they would more likely not have them drop out and work. Plus, even though a lot of people are eligible to work for pay, many do not take part in it; this means that even if those students drop out there is a chance that they won't even be working for pay.

“85% of Ethiopia's workforce engages in subsistence farming – growing enough for themselves and/or family with no surplus- in the countryside.” The people who earn wages earn about \$16 USD (United States Dollars) every month for a 40-hour work week. For a family of five to survive in Ethiopia, they must earn at least \$61 USD. Usually there are only two household members that work, so that's only half of what is needed to survive. This means with a shortage of money, necessities have to be prioritized, and that even includes health care.

Health concerns are high because of the numerous health issues such as disease, STD's, unclean water, and even child birth. There is a limited amount of medical staff available because many doctors work

outside of the country. According to a study done in 2012 titled, Ethiopia: A Developing Nation, it shows that there are more Ethiopian doctors working in Chicago than there are in the whole country of Ethiopia. To even out this number and have more medical staff, many nurses and doctors are undertrained. A typical nurse is trained for just one year and then put to work in medical clinics. This training “lacks the knowledge that fully qualified doctors would be able to provide”. Without this knowledge, the barriers will still be in place for the improvement of Ethiopia. Employees will not be able to do their job effectively if they just spend one year learning the basics. Rural farmers won’t be able to plant and harvest crops to their full potential if the only thing they know how to do is throw seeds on the ground. This barrier of education must be overcome first if they wish to settle other barriers such as rural roads needing to be repaired and even built, having money come in to their wallets, and fighting off diseases and other health problems. The typical family in rural Ethiopia may be going through problems but they all can be fixed with education. (Ethiopia: A Developing Nation, Education In Ethiopia, Testing Methods For Planting Teff In Ethiopia, Worldmark Encyclopedia of Nations)

Education affects Ethiopia in numerous ways as stated above. It really affects agricultural production because farmers do not know how to farm properly. As stated earlier, farmers just throw seeds out into the field and hope that they’ll grow to produce food. If the crops aren’t grown correctly, then they will not yield food. One study done shows that tef is grown in bad soil doesn’t taste good when made into enjera, and it can even make people who eat it sick. With people coming in to teach proper farming techniques in schools along with what the students need to know for the next grade, this will hopefully boost productivity exponentially. If people get sick from the bad food being grown, this will be forcing them to be uneducated doctors and nurses. Another thing these doctors may not be able to tell them is how to have proper nutrition- some people are malnourished. Education is getting better in Ethiopia but they don’t have the right tools to teach (again as stated above). In Ethiopia, the Ethiopia Promoting Basic Services Project, (PBS Project), is helping with the transformation of basic services for the better. A sub-project of this is the General Education Quality Improvement Project (GEQIP). Five components make up the GEQIP “including curriculum, textbooks, and assessment, a teacher development program, a social improvement program, a management administration program, and lastly program coordination, monitoring, and education” (Ethiopia: A Developing Nation). The Ethiopia PBS Project is still at work today with their latest mass report being published on June 2, 2016, and the sub-project GEQIP is still running today with their last report being published March 14, 2016. The Ethiopia PBS Project and its sub-project GEQIP are funded by The World Bank.

There are many complex solutions people may have to solve food insecurity but I only have one single answer: education. In order for anything to happen within this infrastructure, the knowledge of how to go about it must be there. More programs such as the GEQIP must be made and funded. Instead of marketing to the world and its leaders the poor rural side of Ethiopia, a more effective approach should be made where commercials will make people want to more openly give than give because of self guilt. If people were to understand that investing in someone’s education is worth more than giving them a new supply of farming equipment, then those now well educated people could go about it themselves getting their own supplies or better yet, improve the equipment of today with their ideas and creativity. In America, schools get new books fairly often – and transition to eBooks- so why not send our old textbooks to Ethiopia for them to use? Elsewhere in the world they can do the same and if language is a problem, then they’ll be bilingual knowing their language and the book that they are using language.

Next, we should have some colleges have a study abroad program in which upcoming educators can have experience teaching by teaching the people of Ethiopia. Since there are so many teaching position fields this will be great for specialization teachings overseas. People can learn trades, general studies, agriculture, health, and maybe even some home economics. Once the people have been educated then they can come up with ways to go about fixing their other problems. For example, a teen who is learning about environmental science could possibly find out how to apply those skills to better the soil

or water in the area. Better yet, that same person could work with his friend who is studying nursing so they can find new health procedures or medicines that people can practice at home with natural resources around them.

Now it is time to look at the possible situations that may occur with my solution that I have provided. For my commercial approach, some people may argue that this approach is already active and used for other programs trying to benefit undeveloped places. To counter by saying that, yes, these commercials are around, but when you look at them they are all the same; they are boring, playing sad music in the background, and it is almost like guilt-tripping people into donating money. My way of marketing these new commercials for Ethiopia is trying to shine light on the situation. My idea is to target people of all ages on all platforms. The usual commercial of donation asking is on a cable network while not too many ads are online. The ads I want to advertise will be both on television and online. With new ways to put up ads on Facebook, YouTube, and Google today, I can reach a wide audience of people. To make these compelling and eye-catching I imagine a video showing people of all ages in Ethiopia and showing their desire to learn. To make sure people recognize these ads, they will be popping up all over almost every time you watch a video on YouTube or scroll down on your Facebook timeline. With this key in place of good video quality and persistence, I am almost certain this would work for more people to get on board to donate to the cause of educating the people of Ethiopia.

The second part of my solution, which is the study abroad program, could/will also raise a few debates. Two things I know will be questioned are what are the logistics of this program and can people from Ethiopia come over to the United States to be taught. Tackling the first likely question that will be asked, the program can be handled in a simple way. The program will be optional to the teachers, so those who wish to do it can and those who don't want to nothing will be counting against them and same as the ones wanting to do so, nothing would be counting for them. Those that wish to go to Ethiopia for this program would receive the same credits as they would if they didn't go. The only addition is they have more teaching experience. Also, for those wanting to do this program, the cost for this would be half of a usual study abroad program, if not provided free by some colleges. While in Ethiopia, these teachers would teach all ages who want to learn. This would all be volunteer work since this could also be treated as an internship. Addressing the second question that may arise, why can't people from Ethiopia come over to the United States to be taught, is a double-sided view both from the American standpoint and the Ethiopian standpoint. Both of these standpoints have issues in the case of bringing people to America. In an American point of view, people are already fearful of refugees coming over and if this program becomes national news then people would refute it in all ways possible even though there are already people coming from other countries to learn. So to solve this issue I would say to just have this done on a small scale to experiment with at selected colleges instead of bringing a whole load of people to one place. Looking at this from a person of Ethiopia standpoint, a problem that could occur is what if this person comes to United States and doesn't want to leave. If these people see the type of new environment they'll be put in and see that it is better to stay in the United States than go back home to use their knowledge to help their country then it would have been a wasted effort. This is backed up by earlier in this essay when I mentioned that there are more Ethiopian doctors in Chicago than there are in Ethiopia together.

To review the previous paragraph in a whole, there are two main conflicts that could come from this from the two questions that were addressed. Starting with the study abroad program, what if the people of Ethiopia do not want our help? Looking back on history when the United States intervened in another country's issues, this has always been a question asked. The only thing I have to remedy this is to talk with the higher-ups of Ethiopia before implementing a program like this and to locate the community where this program will be established and take a survey if these people want this type of program to happen so that it may better them with knowledge and even self-sufficiency. Going through this process

may be time consuming and to some unnecessary, but if this is done it can be assured that our intervention would be wanted and that every second put into it won't have been for nothing. Lastly, with people from Ethiopia coming to America, this could be settled with forcing these people to go back to their country after coming to the United States to learn. Even though this is a great idea the only problem with it is how other countries set an example of it. One experience I had of this is I knew of someone who came to the United States to learn a fisherman trade and they had to go back to their country after college and if not their family would be harmed. Even though this would not be the case of this program, there still should be a way for the people coming over to return to Ethiopia. The best solution I have at the current point of time is to have a simple contract saying after my study in the United States is done I will return back to Ethiopia to use my knowledge for the betterment of my community and country, and also to just talk with them and make sure they are aware of the contract. In all, with a program like this there will be issues to come up but now I believe with peaceful means they can be solved because at the end we all need to see this is for the betterment of Ethiopia.

Ethiopia is currently becoming a better place but there is still the key factor of education that will shine the light on these people's minds to unlock their power to use the other programs to better their home. People may overlook this solution but those who have unlocked that power will fully understand what it is I am saying. A real example is like giving a child who knows nothing a bag of corn and a shovel to grow food for his family. Instead you should give a book to that child and once he grows up into a well-educated teen give him those same supplies and by using what he learned he can provide for his family. In conclusion, as my grandmother use to say to get me out of a first offense whooping, "You can't just go around doing that. First you have to tell him what's wrong. You'll do better once you know better".

Bibliography

"Ethiopian Cultural Profile." EthnoMed. University of Washington, 2008. Web. 9 June 2016.

"Ethiopia." Worldmark Encyclopedia of Nations. 2007, Neil Burron, Dallas L. Browne, Aadland, and ADAM MOHR. "Ethiopia." Encyclopedia.com. HighBeam Research, 01 Jan. 2007. Web. 9 June 2016.

Stull, Lauren. "Part 2: Barriers." Ethiopia: A Developing Nation. Weebly.com, n.d. Web. 9 June 2016.

Mengistu, Alemayehu. "Ethiopia." Ethiopia. FAO, 2006. Web. 10 June 2016.

Nguyen, Cecile, Marissa Moses, and Victoria Gabroy. "Education in Ethiopia." *Education in Ethiopia*. Tulane University, n.d. Web. 10 June 2016

"Testing Methods For Planting Teff In Ethiopia." One Acre Fund. N.p., 25 June 2014. Web. 10 June 2016.

