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Afghanistan, Factor 14: Conflict Resolution

Ceasing all Confrontation in Afghanistan to Demolish Hunger

More than half of the citizens of Afghanistan are below the poverty line resulting in nearly one third of the population to be food-insecure (World Food). There are many contributing factors in hunger but one of the larger factors in Afghanistan is definitely civil unrest. For over three decades, Afghanistan has been at war with surrounding countries. Political and armed conflict is a growing problem throughout Asia, specifically in the Afghanistan area. Afghanistan is known for having skyrocketing rates of child malnourishment. Less than ideal conditions, due to outbreaks of violence and natural disasters, make it almost impossible for not only children, but adults to get the nourishment that their body requires. So many families are pushed out of their homes because of war and then they migrate towards a less fortunate area that is far away from clinics and health practices. Due to this factor, many cases of malnutrition and diseases commonly occur.

Afghanistan families have many different lifestyles compared to Americans. It would not be unusual or bizarre to come across a household housing up to twenty people. It also is not out of the ordinary for there to be more than one wife living in a household. The oldest male of the household is always the dominant figure in the family. In a borderline poverty setting, both females and males tend to be smaller than average. Many of the meals that are prepared by the wife or female are based around rice and open market crops that are cheap and more wholesome such as potatoes, tomatoes, onions, and some melons. These fresh crops are generally what you will see more of in rural area families that populate Afghanistan. Afghanistani food may also vary in many ways. The three major ethnic groups of food are Pashtuns, Tajiks, and Uzbeks (Food). One well-known edible is the Afghan cuisine. This cuisine usually ties in the cooking method and style of all three ethnic groups stated above (Food). Just as it is for anyone, it is vital to get a variety of nutrients in your diet and this cuisine offers such that.

When your country has been the home of three decades worth of war, this definitely impacts the amount of education children are allowed to receive. Since 2002, Afghan officials have worked closely with the USAID and have slowly made progress and are building more schools and making schools more accessible for not only boys and men, but also girls and women. In 2002, nearly 900,000 boys went to school while at the same time, nearly no females were included in educational opportunities (USAID). Although progress is being made, there are also common concerns that guardians have about sending their children to a building in an unsafe environment. There is no standard curriculum for teachers to follow, making a lot of the information learned very clustered. Also, along the lines of teachers, most adults who teach these two hour “sessions” defined as school are not even licensed or qualified. The number of teachers cannot even come close to competing with the number of students in the class at a time. The literacy rate of the Afghanistan population is estimated to be at about 28.1 percent (Education in Afghanistan). This low number isn’t even compatible with America’s literacy rate of about 86 percent. In Afghanistan, school is looked at as more of a dominant task, meaning you will generally always see more males than females attending school. Similar to U.S. schools, primary school in Afghanistan lasts for about six years. However, this is the common stopping point for children even though they do offer school for twelve years and beyond (Education System in Afghanistan).

Due to the lack of education, reliable health sources are hard to come across in Afghanistan. Most people that have access to health care or services do not have the funds to invest in it anyways. Afghanistan’s health standing is said to be one of the worst. The life expectancy in Afghanistan is one of the lowest worldwide due to little to no access to professional health assistance. In the year of 2002, only about nine

percent of the Afghanistan population lived within a one hour walk of health assistance (USAID). While the rate of health facilities in Afghanistan still aren't superior, that percentage has risen over the years to more than fifty seven percent. Access to health care is very important and Afghanistan is slowly improving their systems and methods to raise their expectancy rate.

By this point, we can come to the conclusion that the citizens of Afghanistan don't have it very easy at all. Adding to their hardship is the economy in general. Afghanistan is one of the poorest countries in the world. Although numbers still aren't where they should be, there is hope and Afghanistan is slowly improving the number of jobs available. Another huge factor in the economy of Afghanistan is their trade market. Many goods and services are traded throughout the country. Jobs available in Afghanistan honestly vary anywhere from a sheepherder to a construction worker. Another downside of the Afghanistan economy is the average amount of money an individual makes per year. This number is usually between three hundred and one thousand, which is on the rare side. For a poor urban family, you would be lucky to even have two hundred coming in. If you live in an urban area, you generally find cheap work around your house.

Another challenge for low class families in Afghanistan is obtaining food. Some situations are so critical that you will see mothers begging people on the street for anything they can get their hands on. Families in these situations get used to eating whatever they can find. Rice and other hearty foods are often what is ideal for these families. There are little to no public gardens found in the urban parts of Afghanistan. Many people do not have the items or money to donate to have garden for themselves, let alone a garden for their community. Many urban families also have no space to grow goods in a garden. Those that are able to do so are very lucky. In really populated parts of Afghanistan there will be markets scattered throughout. In some parts of Afghanistan, there are also some centers that try their best to reach out and help those that are malnourished and sometimes people in different parts of the world are also willing to donate money or products to help the cause.

One major barrier to improving agriculture productivity in Afghanistan is the climate. In Afghanistan, seasons are similar to how they are here in Iowa. The winters in Afghanistan can be very bitter cold and the summers there tend to be very hot. As we all know, it is extremely difficult to produce crops in freezing temperatures. Due to the climate, the supply of foods decreases majorly, especially for a country that is very dependent on home grown foods, such as fruits and vegetables. It is also difficult to tend and maintain a garden in extremely hot temperatures, making neither summer nor winter reliable times to count on a steady supply of food.

One major roadblock to the issue of employment and wages is money in general. The amount of currency circulating in Afghanistan is very low compared to other places in the world. Afghanistan just does not have the funds to support jobs and reasonable wages. Another barrier to employment is the education that these people in Afghanistan are receiving. It is challenging to go into the workforce with no initial experience or background. When these kids spend their days outside of school tending to things at home, they have no idea what to expect or do when they need to expand their boundaries and find a job independently.

Likewise, another large barrier in Afghanistan is how people go about accessing food markets and proper nutrition. In Afghanistan, if an area or place is not in reasonable distance then it is an obstacle to get there. The main methods of transportation in Afghanistan are walking, camels, and donkeys. Even if you are from an urban area, it may still take you hours to get to the nearest market. Again, accessing markets and proper nutrition also comes back to wages and money. Many people can't afford the cost of nutrition for themselves or their family. Most families struggle to make ends meet, let alone worry about how they are treating their body. All of these barriers have a snowball effect. It is vital to have balance within your country.

Conflict resolution plays a tremendous role in many aspects of Afghanistan. Hunger is a rising problem and one huge factor is the wars that have taken place in Afghanistan for three decades. The majority of the doctors, when asked about the situation, do believe that the continuing war and refugee displacement are huge factors in the rising rate of malnourished children (Queally). As Dr. Dawood stated in Queally's article, "There were seven to eight deaths a month there because of acute malnutrition". This malnutrition is caused by these wars taking place. A huge percentage of the money the authority holds in Afghanistan is used in war tactics and weapons to defend themselves. There are thousands and thousands of citizens going hungry each day due to the lack of money available. Rural families are also put in danger each day. Some have no choice but to go hungry because there are explosives planted in their fields, yielding the ability to pick their crops (Queally). Due to the violence that follows every war, these innocent people are getting taken or forced out of their homes and are left with nothing. In some situations, the enemy will even starve out innocent people or take an abundant amount of food to kill off their opponent. Trade between other countries can also easily be cut off or altered. There are multiple reasons why conflict interferes with the food availability.

Conflict or war isn't something that only interferes with some people. All of us are affected by war in some shape or form. For a normal family in Afghanistan, war puts many burdens on each individual. War can lessen the chances of getting three meals a day, making it hard for most people to feel well. Due to political conflict, sudden occurrences may start becoming a normal routine. Each day that you go without food your body grows weaker and weaker. During war, most adults also lose their job due to the fact that there is no way to get there or work under such circumstances. This really adds more stress to the family causing them to maybe go without or make due for a certain period of time. Adding stress to malnourished bodies does not make for a good mixture and may even cause health problems.

As of today, there is still violence circulating all over Afghanistan. War is an increasing problem that becomes more advanced by the day. Most people in Afghanistan have become accustomed to the idea of war and have attempted to mold their lifestyle around it. Now, with that being said, there has been some positive advances since the beginning of the war as stated in above paragraphs. All in all, the present status of this factor is slowly improving. There are many worldwide corporations and partnerships that are trying to work on world hunger as a whole, especially in war zones such as Afghanistan. We can only hope from this point on that war comes to a halt or at least slows down for the sake of these innocent human beings. I think that as humans, we get too caught up in ourselves and we forget to realize that these people are us. These children and families are innocent.

The trends for this factor have pretty much stayed the same. This is a large issue that has taken quite some time and will continue to do so. This is a very lengthy project full of many variables. This factor includes finding ways to limit or stop conflict as a whole so that hunger is no longer an issue. It is hard to honestly give a true estimate on how long we could be fighting to end this problem. We are working against mankind for mankind. How ironic is that? This factor is going to take a lot more than just some convincing but I do believe we have what it takes to end conflict between all. This is a constant issue that needs to be resolved before it is too late.

By cancelling out conflict in Afghanistan, the hope would be to demolish hunger. By resolving conflict, so many other problems would also be taken care of or improved. The amount of money available in the economy would raise substantially making it more realistic to get up and out of poverty. The amount of food that can be produced and grown would be so much larger if conflict was resolved. The environment for the crops would be healthier and safer. Harmless citizens all over in Afghanistan could resume to normal activities and not have to worry about getting blown to pieces while simply checking their garden. Conflict resolution would result in the increase of jobs available and individuals would be able to financially start supporting their families. No one deserves to wake up each day in fear of being raped,

held hostage, or even shot for that matter. Nor does anyone deserve to go hungry each day for avoidable reasons.

There are many undesirable side effects of living in a war zone. One factor that is often overlooked is the cleanliness of the air and environment in Afghanistan. The pollution is terrible there which is quite interesting, considering the fact that most walk to their destinations. War wears down the air you breathe a great amount. There is so much debris and unhealthy chemicals that float in the air. Issues such as pollution are huge when considering war conflict. One other factor that may affect conflict in general would be population growth. The more people that are introduced into violence, the harder it is going to be to ban or stop it all from spiraling even further out of control. There are certainly little issues that must be evaluated and taken into consideration.

My recommendation on conflict resolution in Afghanistan would be to start by reaching out to other countries. It may sound unprofessional and simple but I really believe that there is some good in people and if you find the right people, they would be willing to support Afghanistan or maybe even make some sort of deal. Gaining support from others would help end the outbreak of malnourishment. Another recommendation of mine would be to educate everyone, worldwide. People need to be educated about the lifelong effects of wars. Individuals all over need to realize that we are putting harmless lives at risk by the choices we are making. Equality and freedom needs to be taught and stressed all over this world. Conclusions need to be made and we need to figure out more mature ways of handling issues.

When we get put in rough situations we were never taught to pull a gun out and shoot the enemy. What we were taught, was to respectfully disagree and come to a conclusion or an agreement. Teaching self-control and the proper way to handle an issue at hand are all basic skills that need to be taught and learned from day one. We are all wonderfully created with the ability to go above and beyond but when we chose to use our talents and abilities for the worse, we are demonstrating acts of greed and unkindness. General rules need to be enforced and followed at all times. More background checks should maybe be mandatory on individuals all over the world. If you think war is acceptable, you need professional help and this help should be in reach through the government for everyone and anyone who needs it.

There are many ways that the United States could help. One way would be to take up collections for the cause and be the change that we all want to see. Simply getting the word out about the hidden dangers of war is also an excellent place to start. The United States could even create care packages or meals to be sent overseas. All it takes is little groups or organizations getting together. Times are hard here at home but even doing fundraisers or meals to raise money is a good way to help because citizens are getting a meal in return for their money to help individuals in Afghanistan. While we do have some of our own issues at home, we need to see the big picture and realize others have it worse and by helping them they may return the favor in the future if we ever were in a crisis. Advertising with powerful messages is also an effective way to get people to wake up and face reality. We need to show people here at home what others are going through. Live feed of the conditions over in Afghanistan may also be helpful for not only the citizens here, but also the government. We need to wake up and make a change.

One the other hand, there are also steps and actions that Afghanistan itself can take as a whole to banish world hunger while doing the same to war. One event that citizens of Afghanistan could take place in is an informative meeting about the cost and variables of conflicts. From that point on they could then proceed to write letters to send out to other countries explaining what they are trying to accomplish and inform the general public about. Small steps at a time can make a huge difference in the end. If this were to be done, it would take quite a bit of motivation and help from the community. These meetings would be more impressive and also more informal and accurate if the national government attended and gave input and guidance throughout. Partnering with organizations and maybe even sponsors eventually would be a very smart motive. Having that backbone in your movement makes it much more reliable. It honestly

all just comes down to how badly we want to see the change in this world. Now, with all that being said, I do realize by this point that the Afghanistan government may not be the strongest and that may cause some hardships in the process of seeking guidance from them. It all comes down to communication in the end. Citizens need to be willing to stand up for their needs. These people need to let their voices be heard.

The typical family in Afghanistan could be present and share ideas at these meetings. They need to be one hundred percent reliable and ready to be the change in the world. Maybe if there is a few weeks where they have a little change to spare they could chip in for donations to go towards miscellaneous costs. Families would have to be brave and stand up for what they believe in. Individuals of all ages could attend these meetings and work towards the main goal of ending war altogether. Slowly this act would hopefully educate people all around the world about the negative impacts of war. Advertising and getting the word out would also be very critical in this whole process of getting everyone motivated and involved in this movement. This idea may be farfetched to some, but I am a firm believer in the fact that anything truly is possible and there really aren't any limits to what we can accomplish as human beings.

In conclusion, hunger is a worldwide problem that has the potential of being solved. It is on each and every one of our shoulders to solve this problem that we all created. War is a growing issue that also needs to be stopped before it gets too out of hand and we have absolutely no grip on it. Afghanistan is just one of many examples of the effects of war. Personally, I can't imagine going to bed hungry and waking up hungry almost every day. After furthering my research, I am honestly still in shock about the things that I discovered. I am very fortunate that I am one of the few that get to say I eat three meals a day. Anyone who can say that needs to be grateful of what they have and realize that there are people starving. This is reality and we need to wake up. So many people around the world know not nearly enough information and statistics about world hunger. Taking a close look at one country in specific showed that there are many underlying causes of hunger but one of the largest reasons we see so much hunger in Afghanistan is because of confrontation with other countries. Educating others is one step we can take to decrease the chance of hunger. This conflict resolution needs to happen now for the sake of every single one of us.

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