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April 15, 2021
Philippines: Education
Title: Solving Hunger In The Philippines With Education

Background

Imagine you're a young child. You are 8 years old, happy, and full of life. It is 100 plus degrees where you live. You're surviving off of grains of rice and salt. Not much food. Your family is constantly working and you have four siblings who live in a crowded worn-down home with your extended family. Although you're malnourished, everything seems to be fine and happy because you're just a kid. You play outside, feel the dirt, and climb the trees. There is just one thing you are eager to do, which is going to school because you never attended. You can't read or write. Your parents are too busy working, your siblings have to take care of your other siblings, cook, and pick up jobs at a young age. Luckily you are just imagining, because every day, children in the Philippines experience this. The Philippines is an archipelagic country located in Southeast Asia. The Pacific and Indian oceans are the surrounding bodies of water of the land. The Philippines is home to 110 million people, including my own family. The beautiful country has approximately 7,500 islands with only 2,000 of them inhabited and nearly 5,000 still unnamed on global maps. There are 175 languages spoken within that country alone. The country is known for their beautiful beaches and rich natural resources including nickel, copper, gold, silver, and chromium, as well as human resources. As years progressed, the rich natural resources have been slowly stripped away due to colonial rule and occupation of the island by Spain, Japan, and America. Despite its rich natural resources and beautiful beaches, it is still facing extreme poverty and hunger. By virtue of covid, there has been a lot that has happened overall that has affected the Philippines' GDP, population, hunger, and more. This time, we will talk about the education system and how it affects hunger and poverty rates in the Philippines.

Education System

A study was done and the conclusion was 6 out of 10 families in 2016, and 5 out of 10 families in 2017 had no access to basic education in the Philippines. In a normal household, the Philippines has 4-5 people, according to multiple sources, although from my personal experience and observations, the correct number is most likely 8 people, plus extended families in most cases. A strong factor of poverty in the Philippines is the ineffective education system. Both of my Filipino parents were born and raised in the Philippines. I went to a school there when I was 5, in preschool. "In the Philippines, the academic school year begins in June and concludes in March, a period that covers a total of 40 weeks." According to my parents, going to school during their days was not mandatory for lower secondary school, meaning it was optional. A lot

of the school system has had colonial influence due to the Spanish, Japanese, and American rule and occupation of the country. As a result, Filipino education is very challenging, as my parents have experienced primary, lower secondary, upper secondary, and college. They state that it is way more challenging and difficult to study in the Philippines due to the high and advanced standards. The grading system for the Philippines is 91.00 - 100% is an A, 83.00 - 90.99 is a B, 75.00 - 82.99 is a C, a D is 70.00 - 74.99 percent, and lastly a 69% and below is failing, reported by scholaro.com. As reported by philstar.com Filipino students study extremely hard and are serious about education. Teachers should get paid more and students should have better classroom and school resources, as well as career opportunities.

Additionally, due to the extremely low salaries of teachers and lack of materials due to poverty, then the students are not getting enough opportunities or proper education. Poverty has taken a toll on the ineffective education systems in the Philippines and the education systems have taken a toll on poverty. Since teachers are not getting paid enough, and the overall school system does not have enough materials and resources, this can lead to the students not being motivated to learn or take importance to engage in career opportunities. The teacher's average salary in the Philippines is 470,000 Philippine pesos. That translates to only \$9,207. When you're in the Philippines, 470,000 pesos could only get you so far due to the overpricing of simple items. Everything there is a bit more expensive due to the different money systems.

Poverty and Malnutrition

Besides what can be done to fix what causes poverty, the effects of extreme poverty can contribute to many unintended ongoing issues like malnutrition, poor economy, water scarcity, and more. The main topic that poverty causes are malnutrition in the Philippines. "Experts say 20 percent of Filipino children are underweight and the Philippines ranks ninth in the world for the number of children with stunted growth." (aljazeera.com) The average Filipino diet consists of rice, vegetables, and fish. (factsanddetails.com) Every day, 95 children die from malnutrition in the Philippines. (unicef.org) With very little money to buy food, Filipinos are not able to survive because there are limited sources of food. Since the distribution of income is low, the demand for food is also low causing that to affect the production of food to low-income residents. "More than 20 percent of the population (or over 15 million people) are considered undernourished, and close to one-third of Filipino children under five are moderately or severely underweight." Good nutrition increases school retention rates, as well as the quality of the education the children receive. So, what can we do to help? Since good nutrition encourages students to go to school and get an education, more students getting an education can increase career and job involvement within the students, which can improve the economy and make the Philippines a stronger, better country that is moved away from poverty. The organization Action Against Hunger humanitarian organization that pushes for long-term change continuously addresses issues contributing to social injustices.

The Philippines has accessible resources and enough money to fix issues like poor infrastructure, malnutrition, ineffective education, a weak economy, low income to those who work in agriculture, and etc., although, the Philippine government is not putting the money to good use that could improve the economy and overall state of the Philippines. The government system needs to be improved for the Philippines to solve most of its issues. Which one of them is poverty. Poverty can be the main cause of malnutrition and hunger in the Philippines.

Government and its role in Education and Hunger

As discussed previously, the government system has been affected by the colonial rule of multiple countries. This can leave some long-term consequences and effects on how the government is run which can influence the role of education and hunger in the Philippines. The Imba Life website article argues that even now, despite years of independence, the education system has not been successful at eliminating chronic colonial mentality which abounds like a mental blight within or without the academy. The quality of education is financially driven, which makes higher education a privilege, not a right. Before we further dive into the government's role in education and hunger in the Philippines, we must first discuss the history. During the pre-colonial period, most children were taught by parents, tribal tutors, or the community. Most of the teachings were generational and were usually taught through stories, songs, poetry, dances, medicinal practices and advice. It is now the late 1500s, which begins the Spanish colonial period. Formal education was brought to the Philippines by the Spaniards, which was conducted mostly by religious orders. Upon learning the local languages and writing systems, they began teaching Christianity, the Spanish language, and Spanish culture. These religious orders opened the first schools and universities as early as the 16th century. Spanish missionaries established schools immediately after reaching the islands. After three hundred years of colonization, the Philippines was able to gain Independence on June 12, 1898. The history behind the government system influences the present, which explains why the government and education system is what it is now. Despite the history, the role the government plays in current times. A lot of systems and policies prevent most students from being able to attend school. In some circumstances, kids just stay home because they either have to pick up a job, or their parents are working almost 24/7. They do not have money for food, uniforms, or school supplies. A way to solve this is by increasing job opportunities for the poor, especially in rural areas. Another is to fund more money and build schools in the rural areas, which will create jobs for teachers and school staff. Also, the government needs to fund supplies of food in these poor areas.

Solution

Despite all the challenges, there are organizations out there to help the Philippines and its tough situations. One being give2Asia, which is an organization that partners with trusted nonprofit organizations to support frontline health workers and institutions responding to the coronavirus pandemic. Give2Asia is so successful because, since 2001, it has built a network of over 2,000 grant recipients and 15,000 donors in 25 countries. Another local organization named “Education Foundation of the Philippines”, has provided and funded multiple resources to the schools in the Philippines. “The resources it has provided are science materials that are used by all grades, math and reading materials, and general school supplies.” Even with these organizations, the Philippines can change a lot about their education and governing & policy implementation. Furthermore, Filipino education needs to be improved. Teachers need a higher raise, students need better resources, they need to be encouraged to attend school and take on careers and reach their dreams. This, I believe, will improve the economy in the Philippines. Improving the economy will help with poverty and better the lives of many Filipinos. Additionally, there is an amazing organization striving to help Filipino kids with their education. www.unicef.org “UNICEF advocates for greater investment in the country’s cognitive capital. With skilled teachers, engaging educational materials, basic toilets, clean water, and hygiene facilities, children can acquire knowledge and socio-emotional skills they need to thrive.” Education, poverty, and hunger are all tied together in some way. As for the ordinary and average citizens living in the country, citizens can start with advocacy. Regular teachers, and students passionate about education can advocate for a better education system and speak to governmental leaders about these issues, which can bring attention to the issues in the government offices. To furthermore explain the solutions, the Philippine government can open more new schools in rural areas, as well as free lunch programs in that school to both, nourish the children’s minds and bodies. There are also many existing government programs such as Education Service Contracting Scheme (ESCS)/ Government Assistance to Students and Teachers in Private Education (GASTPE), which provides financial assistance to poor students who have graduated from elementary school to continue their studies in high schools. Each student could receive between USD 127.91 (PHP 6,500) - USD 196.79 (PHP 10,000) per school year. The program targets 1 million students every five years or 2.62% of the school-aged population.

Conclusion

If all Filipinos contributed to the community, we could all work together to fix these issues. Slowly, but surely. By 2022, the Philippines aims to be a developing country. With proper government funding, strategies, and the involvement of the people, the Philippines can work towards a better economy, which can help fund and sustain an effective school system, which leads to employment and an enhancement to the economy, which eventually leads up to the poverty and the malnutrition issue in the Philippines. Everything is connected, one huge country's decision affects the other. Education, government, and malnutrition & poverty are all intertwined in many ways. By that, by identifying the problems, we can find everyday solutions.

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