

Victoria Linde
Lawrence North High School
Indianapolis, IN
Central African Republic: Education

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The world is drastically changing more and more everyday. Phones and computers are getting smarter and cars are getting faster. Many of us can keep up with these changes, but others not so much. Countries such as Central African Republic (CAR) cannot keep up with these changes and their country is under-developed because of it. Children in CAR are losing their ability to push change in their communities because of the lack of growth in their country. Besides technology, many people across the world don't have access to a reliable food source. This causes children and families to go days hungry. Non profit organizations and church missionaries can only do so much and even then it isn't enough to support families for generations to come.

1. Central African Republic Living

Central African Republic is located in the heart of Africa. It's the home of 4.6 million people and their president Faustin-Archange Touadera (World Factbook). The northern part of Central African Republic is treeless and nearly no other cultivation is located in this region. However, the southern part of CAR is covered in rainforests and irrigation. CAR sits on an abundance of water resources due to the Boali waterfalls. Though the water only flows during "wet" seasons, the Boali dams hold and store all water used in CAR.

The home life of CAR citizens consists of women playing an imperative role in the provision of household foods. Men are often found in control of the production of such crops. All in all, men plant the foods and women cultivate them. Major family consumption crops are manioc, maize, rice, squashes, and peanuts. Cotton and coffee are cash crops that are exported out of CAR that are produced predominantly on small farms. Central African Republic is essentially self sufficient in basic food items and a diverse agriculture is strongly aided by the CAR government (Central African Republic).

2. Setbacks

There are several major setbacks to living in CAR that affect the food security issue. Firstly, a major crisis between CAR's citizens and the Central Republic's government broke out in 2012 and destroyed the social structure throughout the country. Politicians and rebellious groups mobilized on the youth in urban areas, and violent crime became an intense reality in the daily lives of CAR citizens armed groups controlled (and still do) enormous amounts of territory. Many of the young children in CAR are unemployed and not in school, making them easy targets for kidnappings and homicide victims in their community. Also, according to the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes article Youth Engagement in Conflict Transformation in the Central African Republic, youth unemployment is estimated to be at 12.5%, and 75% of CAR's population is under 35 years old. The article also states that "CAR youth have been part of the conflict, either as members of armed rebel groups or agents of peace."

Secondly, the education sector in CAR has been declining for a long time. Children are less educated than their parents allowing them to become more vulnerable to armed forces and being manipulated by politicians. According to the Article “Central African Republic: Four Priorities for the New President,” in 2008 the education system only accounted for 15% of expenditure, “teachers were poorly qualified and badly paid,” and sometimes didn’t even show up to work at all.

The lack of education in Central African Republic plays a very vital role in the shortfall of income to families and somewhat of a lack of agricultural productivity. Currently, school is compulsory to all children between the ages of 8-14. According to the graph by Foreign Credit Inc Education systems in Central African Republic, The first 5 years are spent in primary school, and at the end the students are tested to decide who will continue their academic education and who will take the vocational route. This means that children leave school at the age of 14 and never look back on their education, creating an ignorance to their surroundings and the crisis taking place in their country. When these children leave school early they’re missing out on opportunities to receive the best education they can, and in a world like today education is a very important key in the strive for success.

3. Why Education is Important

Education plays a crucial role in today’s world because it gives a person their own means to survival. Therefore, by providing a better education system, the citizens of CAR will be better able to combat the main problems affecting them, and more specifically, food security. Currently, the citizens do not only have the education necessary to understand the economic crisis facing their country, but they also do not have the fundamental education of agriculture or crucial ways to enhance their food production. Since September of 2017 about 2.4 million people in CAR are in need of “humanitarian assistance” and 2 million of them are affected by food insecurity (Food Assistance Fact Sheet).

With the lack of knowledge of what’s going on in their community children in CAR have no way of positively impacting their community. Education can make a much bigger impact on these kids than most think. The option to leave school at the age of 14 only hinders the education in the lives of many citizens, and it’s not just children. Children in CAR are missing out on important educational and learning skills due to the lack of responsibility by their government, which is most closely responsible for the 36.8% overall literacy rate in CAR (World Factbook). The illiteracy only further extends to other areas of ignorance such as when it comes to their own issues of agriculture and how to fix them.

6. Solutions

The citizens of CAR are already alone due to the ongoing crisis in their country between rebellious groups and their government. Their government clearly hasn’t prioritized the education of CAR citizens and it shows through their constantly declining literacy rate. The first solution is to raise the compulsory age level to 16 children will stay in school longer and will learn more than they would with the current compulsory age of 14. With the compulsory age

raised we will have more students in school and less joining armed forces rebelling against their government.

Secondly, STEM courses should be added to the CAR education system because they will allow these children to address and solve many of the agricultural issues within their communities. STEM stands for Science, Technology, Engineering and Math. Instead of teaching each subject separately, STEM combines them and applies the lessons to real life situations. STEM courses are a vital necessity to the lives of all CAR citizens. With project based learning kids will be able to experience hands on experiments and see for themselves the changes they can bring to their homes. Many kids leave school early because their families need help on the farms at home causing them to miss out on important learning time. If these children took a class that was more hands on and much more exciting these students would want to stay in school longer and would truly be engaged in school. By introducing STEM classes, citizens of Central African Republic will become even more self sufficient and can make great change in their communities.

8. Why STEM will work

STEM classes will also help create jobs in CAR. According to STEMCONNECTOR.org, in the US 2018 projections estimate the demand for STEM related jobs will be at 8.65 million. “The field of cloud computing will have created 1.7 million jobs between 2011 and 2015” according to the report. If we can create this many jobs in the US, imagine how many we could create in countries like Central African Republic. Adding these courses means we could be adding Engineers, Mathematicians and so many more reliable and needed jobs in CAR. And in the long run, this will gradually help the CAR economy.

Also, by providing STEM classes to students in Central African Republic, it would pave for them a way to explore sciences, technology, engineering careers, and math. STEM classes will open a new source of income for students and teachers. First, those who study one of these specific topics will be able to teach those courses. Second, students will have better qualified teachers. Lastly, but most importantly, these students will receive an education that will benefit one of the main issues affecting their country, which is food security, as they will learn about the causes of the problem and possible ways to fix it.

9. Other Possibilities

We must also make the government responsible for raising the budget for schools in CAR. All of these solutions are impossible without the proper funds. If the CAR government would consider raising the amount of money the education system receives STEM classes and teachers that are qualified to teach them will become a reality to the students of CAR schools.

If the government cannot or is not willing to raise the money for the education system then organizations such as Books for Africa can supply schools books that correlate with the courses the students would be taking and other non-profits that are willing to provide computers, lab objects, agricultural items such as farm tools etc will also help make these classes and their impact more realistic.

Nonprofits like the School Fund organization can browse through schools in CAR and decide what class items they need and can provide them to these students and schools directly. Though

not all supplies will be made readily available, fundraising throughout the country and through church programs such as missionaries can provide the proper supplies to fulfill the needs of these students and their schools.

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