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### **Empowering Zambia**

“Give a man a fish, and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish, and you feed him for a lifetime,” (Ritchie 342). If gender discrimination and harassment of women ended in Zambia, many could feed themselves for a lifetime - Not only themselves but hundreds of others. Clean water and sanitation are also an impediment to change and growth in Zambia. Some improvements are being seen, but much more needs to be done to provide a safe environment. High rates of sexual assault and discrimination against females in Zambia keep women from feeling safe from leaving their homes. Women do not hold any standing in government or have much of a voice at all to help them improve this. On a local level the harassment and discrimination often keep woman from contributing in daily chores outside of the house. The patriarchal society in Zambia is holding women back, as they are seen as weak and less intelligent than the men. Teaching young children the importance of human rights may be a first step to helping the next generation to respect all people. Perhaps it is time for other countries to exert some influence on the Zambian government in the name of equality. If women were given the proper tools, training, and space needed for farming, as well as a safe environment, free from discrimination and harassment, they could feed a nation for decades to come.

Zambia is a presidential republic whose capital was Lusaka; however, the country announced in May of 2017, that the capital would be moved to Ngabwe (Zambia, World Fact Book). The climate of Zambia is mostly tropical but has rainy seasons from October to April (Zambia, World Fact Book). According to the World Fact book, Zambia has one of the highest urbanization rates in all of Africa at 4.35%; currently, 41.8% of the population lives in urban areas (Zambia, World Fact Book). Around 31% of the land is used for agricultural purposes, 66% is forest, and 2% is labeled as “other” (Zambia, World Fact Book). The major agricultural products are corn, rice, and peanuts (Zambia, World Fact Book). Their largest exports are copper and cobalt (Zambia, World Fact Book). The average size of a rural farm is 2.5 hectares, which is minuscule compared to the USA average of approximately 175.634 hectares (Zambia, World Fact Book). Zambians usually eat corn/maize-based meals and receive their protein from ground nuts (Zambia, World Fact Book). Families tend to grow their own food rather than buy it. Much of the jobs are in agriculture or a factory (Zambia, World Fact Book). The average wage is \$16,913 per year with around 60% of the people living below the poverty line (Zambia, World Fact Book). There is not much in the way of healthcare opportunities (Zambia, World Fact Book). There are free public schools for grades 1 through 7, however, additional education becomes very expensive, very quickly (Zambia, World Fact Book). According to a paper by Genevieve Ballinger and Elizabeth Brundige called “*They Are Destroying Our Futures,*” many women leave school soon after the seventh grade, not only due lack of funds, but also pregnancy or sexual harassment. There is next to no clean water; in fact, this is one of the major problems in Zambia, other than food distress (Zambia, World Fact Book). Most people have a phone of some sort (Zambia, World Fact Book). There are a few roads, more unpaved than paved (Zambia, World Fact Book). The population of Zambia is around 15.972 million, with around 46.03% being 0-14 years of age (Zambia, World Fact Book). The fertility rate is 5.63 children per woman because in Zambia having more children is considered beneficial, as relatively few children reach adulthood (Zambia, World Fact Book). In a Zambian family, the average age of a mother is around 18 at the time of marriage, a father around 23, and 5 or so children, possibly from before the marriage (Zambia, World Fact Book). The average age a woman will give birth to her first child is 19.2 years

old (Zambia, World Fact Book). Women are often pregnant before finishing school because of sexual violence by either a male classmate, teacher, stranger, or family member (Ballinger, Brundige, They Are Destroying Our Futures). Around 56% of women over 15 can read. 70.9% of men over the age of 15 can read (Zambia, World Fact Book).

The water and sanitation situation is improving (Tembo, Sitko, Descriptive Agricultural Statistics and Analysis for Zambia). This is measured by how many people have access to clean water and are able to dispose of waste safely. The statistics show that although it is improving, it is a painstakingly slow process (Tembo, Sitko, Descriptive Agricultural Statistics and Analysis for Zambia). It is likely that this positive trend will plateau if the gender bias doesn't change. Improving water availability and sanitation systems would help improve farming and provide new employment opportunities, thus improving the economy (Tembo, Sitko, Descriptive Agricultural Statistics and Analysis for Zambia). This will help improve impoverished families' lifestyles along with empowering women. An organization called **Anchor of Hope Charities** is working to help improve not only the water and sanitation issues, but is also teaching women to feed their families. Almost all of the agriculture is already managed by women because the men often work in a factory, however, women normally do not work in the field planting seeds (Tembo, Sitko, Descriptive Agricultural Statistics and Analysis for Zambia). Instead, they take care of the plants once they have already begun growing because women don't have the ability to buy the seeds or equipment necessary to yield a substantial crop (Anchor of Hope Charities). This is primarily because women have little to no control over the money (Tembo, Sitko, Descriptive Agricultural Statistics and Analysis for Zambia). Changing this would provide women with the ability to plant seeds before the first rain, which is the prime planting season (Anchor of Hope Charities).

Another barrier that keeps women from being able to properly provide for their family is that they are afraid of sexual harassment. With the fear of harassment, women often cannot leave the safety of their homes and provide for their families. Around 50% of women report having been assaulted and/or harassed in their lifetime multiple times (Ballinger, Brundige, They Are Destroying Our Futures). This number is likely higher because many cases are unreported. Women report being harassed in the street by strangers, male classmates, or teachers (Ballinger, Brundige, They Are Destroying Our Futures). Often, women will be forced to marry the man that violated them in exchange for money for her family (Ballinger, Brundige, They Are Destroying Our Futures). Not only does this make women powerless to help in the crisis of food instability, it is a violation of the most basic human rights. It is common in some communities to still blame women for being victims of such violence (Ballinger, Brundige, They Are Destroying Our Futures). A study conducted by Women and Law in Southern Africa-Zambia, Avon Global Center for Women and Justice at Cornell Law School Cornell Law School, and the International Human Rights Clinic found that 84% of women have either directly or known someone who experienced some form of sexual violence from another student or a teacher while going to or leaving school. 56% of the women interviewed said that either they had been or knew someone who had been propositioned for sex or a relationship with a teacher (Ballinger, Brundige, They Are Destroying Our Futures). Although there are laws against this, most young women do not report it because they are either unaware as to whom they are supposed to report it or they are afraid of what will happen to them if they do (Ballinger, Brundige, They Are Destroying Our Futures). Unless something is done to allow the women to take control of their bodies and take charge in caring for their families, the food instability will never change and women will continue to suffer.

Another major issue facing Zambia is a gender bias against women. In Zambian society, women are seen as weaker and less intelligent (Ballinger, Brundige, They Are Destroying Our Futures). Women are further disadvantaged because it is frowned upon if they work because of biases, sexual

assaults, or having a child (Tembo, Sitko. Descriptive Agricultural Statistics and Analysis for Zambia). There is an immense amount of bias evident in the educational environment in Zambia. “In addition, dropout rates among girls are often attributed to early marriages, pregnancy, heavy domestic tasks, and experiences or fear of sexual abuse” (Ballinger, Brundige, They Are Destroying Our Futures). Until the biases change, nothing can be done to help fix the problem of horrendous gendered violence against women. If the biases change and gendered violence decreases, then the women will be able to receive the tools needed to feed their village. Helping one woman get the tools she needs can help improve the food gains for the whole village. However, nearly all of the women have little to no control over the family money, and when they do receive money, they tend to use it to help their children (Anchor of Hope Charities). This makes it rather arduous for a woman to get what she needs to provide for herself, let alone a village. **Anchor of Hope Charities** helps empower Zambian women by providing the tools needed to produce food. “If we improve access to opportunities for one woman, we improve her ability to produce successful yields and thereby her economic and social environment is enhanced. Women are key to eliminating hunger and poverty,” says the **Anchor of Hope Charities** website.

Conditions of human rights are improving, but slowly. These improvements can be attributed to the various nonprofit charities, such as **Anchor of Hope**. These organizations help empower women and provide them with the tools they need to be successful. These tools are both physical tools to aid in farming, as well as educational. Volunteers work side by side with Zambians to teach them more effective methods of farming. By empowering these women, there will be a dramatic increase in food stability. Not only would there be more food readily available, but the social and ethical issues may be brought to light. Another noteworthy charity is the **Chikumbuso Women and Orphans Project**. Chikumbuso is based in Ng’ombe, Zambia and currently does not extend further than that. They work with women and children who have lost their homes, providing them with an education in order to create a better future for their own children. From empowered women come strong families. **Anchor of Hope Charities** has 32 women who are providing food for over 300 men, women, and children through their program, empowering women to become effective farmers. Perhaps if this could be combined with the **Chikumbuso Women and Orphans**, they could grow to create a more hopeful future for Zambia.

As previously mentioned, there is a bias against women in Zambian society. A way to help change this bias would be to empower women by helping them gain more rights and social standing within Zambia. A weakness of this strategy is the difficulty to quickly make an impactful change because of the high rates of sexual assault. High sexual assault rates imply that the people who are assaulting these women do not see them as people, instead simply as an object to be used. In exchange for money or not pursuing a lawsuit, families will often force the rape victim to marry their rapist if she is pregnant (Ballinger, Brundige, They Are Destroying Our Futures). Ideally the Zambian government would be a leader in this fight. Many of the issues mentioned can be solved by increasing enforcement of laws condemning rapists as well as those who sexually harass. Unfortunately the Zambian government is a male dominated administration. Pressure from western governments could perhaps improve this inequality. While countries such as the United States cannot and shouldn’t necessarily dictate how other countries treat their citizens, basic human rights are being violated and it may be time for governments to force this issue.

If women were provided with the proper equipment and resources to farm, then the food stability would increase by around 30 percent (Anchor of Hope Charities). This would help the economy as well, due to the increase of the food supply. Women are a key point in helping increase food stability in Zambia. Giving women the resources needed to farm is one of the best solutions and would likely produce the fastest results. It will be extremely difficult to change a culture founded on oppression.

There will need to be cultural changes. Every individual deserves to be treated like a human being. The first step to this change could be early education. The schools can lead this change. Since this begins with the teachers, it may need to be started by educating these teachers. It would be wonderful if the female teachers could lead this fight. Unfortunately many women do not trust the male teachers at this time. If children are taught from a young age that all people deserve respect, perhaps the next generation of Zambians will be more enlightened about human rights. The amount of sexual assault and gender-based violence challenges potentially empowered women because of fear of the repercussions. Take away this fear and the whole society will benefit. Until something is done about the lack of basic human rights for women in Zambia, the food crisis will never change. Education and equality can be the answer to changing Zambia for the better.

Another possible solution could be to empower the women from within the communities. By teaching the older women how to farm and providing them with the proper tools, they could teach the younger women, who could then teach the generation after them, and so on and so forth. The women in the communities will grow stronger due to their own power in their village. It will be challenging to fix the current issues by bringing outsiders into their home. The best course of action is to make the communities self-sufficient. By starting with women who are already knowledgeable about and trusted within the community, it is promoting women to be seen as important members of the village. It helps them to be seen as people. By establishing members of the communities with the tools and knowledge that they need, they can teach it to the remainder of the village. Yes, there will have to be strangers teaching the first generation of women, but after this, there would be no need to bring in outsiders. Another option is to bring people from within the village who went to college or have more experience to come in and teach them. If this is done, generations to come will have the resources they need and won't need continuous help from outside sources. There will still be additional questions. Within what communities in Zambia should this be taught? How far will the knowledge spread? Will there be more accountability for the younger women since the older generation is present? Nevertheless, this is a quicker and longer lasting solution to the food crisis that surrounds Zambia relative to simply putting more money into Zambia. Simply pushing more money into the country will not solve the problems of food insecurity.

If teaching the older woman does not work, an alternative approach could be focusing on the younger generations. Part of what makes **Anchor of Hope Charities** so successful is that many of the people working with the villagers stay there for years at a time. This helps the villagers fully understand how and why the farming works the way it does. The problem of food insecurity will not change unless all persons in the country are willing to change. One way to make Zambia self-sufficient is to teach the children. If the people are supervised, then everything runs smoothly, however, when the volunteers leave often the people go back to their old ways. People will eat the livestock they worked so hard to raise and do not water the plants, causing them to die. The way to combat this downhill spiral is by teaching the children and young adults of the communities about proper farming techniques. This not only teaches the younger generation about proper farming, but also hopefully teaches them to respect each other as they work together. Obviously, there must be proper consideration and respect when trying to change a culture, but the problems with starvation cannot be helped unless all people are allowed to participate.

Food insecurity is a great concern for the people of Zambia. One of the biggest obstacles is gender discrimination and harassment of women. Women are often afraid to leave the house to help with the farming. Although water sanitation is also a prominent problem in Zambia, fixing this alone would not solve the issue of food insecurity. With the proper training, equipment, and land, food security for Zambians could increase by an astonishing 30% (Anchor of Hope Charities). If the basic needs of the family are met, then incredible changes are able to begin. If there are empowered

women who can provide for a family, then not only will the food security increase, but the economy and global standing will hopefully improve. The way to effectively change food instability in Zambia is to provide women with the resources and education, as well as a safe environment to become empowered, effective members of society. However, the question of how to approach the much needed culture changes must be asked. Is it possible to change the mindset of the adults? Is it wrong to attempt to change the future mindset of the children? What part can the educational system play in this change? Should the main human rights be focused on in the schools or in the government? Can other government help influence improved human rights? If they can, should they? Only one thing is certain, the future of Zambia is in the hands of their women and children. "Give a man a fish, and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish, and you feed him for a lifetime," (Ritchie 342). Or just maybe it should be, "Give a woman a fish and you will feed her for a day. Teach a woman to fish, and you will feed her family for a lifetime."

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