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Angola: An Exhaustive Approach to the Education Crisis

Quadratic formula. Pythagorean theorem. Ancient Mongolian history. Newton's laws of motion. All concepts we learn and master through primary and secondary education. These basic skills serve as a foundation for further developing our knowledge in more crucial skills for the future. It is not a question of whether or not education is important for every individual, but rather why it is not seen as a priority in every country. And unfortunately, Angola is a country known for its lack of emphasis on education for children. As the country of Angola faces hunger, starvation, and high levels of poverty, we can see how this drastically impacts their education system.

Angola is a country located in South Africa, bordered by the Atlantic Ocean. Known for abundance in natural resources, such as oil and diamonds, Angola provides imperative exports to many countries. While on the outside Angola is known for its Atlantic beaches and its Portuguese-inspired cuisine, unfortunately, this beautiful image is not upheld throughout the whole country. This country is a mix of Portuguese and African culture. The Angolians' main language is Portuguese and their main religion is Roman Catholic Christianity. The cultural origins of Angola are tied to the traditions of the central Bantu peoples and the ancient kingdom of Kongo. At a population of 31.83 million people, 36.6% of that population is in poverty(Kritsch). This large percentage of poverty has spiked from 1975 to 2002 when Angola was in the middle of a devastating Civil War. This disastrous war had injured over 1.5 million citizens and severely damaged public administration, the economy, and religious institutions, and unfortunately, Angola has not fully recovered from this war(Taylor). As Angola is making small but meaningful steps in recovering from their Civil War, they were hit with massive droughts in 2019(Prates). These droughts changed the way the Angolan people approached their daily lives.

The raining season season affected parts of southern Angola during the first few months of 2019, which provided insufficient water for the families living in Angola. Considering that Angola was already a dry environment, the lack of rain prevented many high levels of soil moisture and cause high levels of vegetation stress. During this rapidly worsening emergency crisis, over 2.3 million people were affect, and over 1 million of them were children under the age of 5. Paola Balladeli, a member of the United Nations, says how the increased temperature and dry moisture in the land has greatly affected the country,

“Temperatures in 2019 were the highest in 45 years and drought is driving increasing hunger and malnutrition, especially in Cunene, Huíla, Bié and Namibe provinces”. Increased levels of hunger and malnutrition have driven over 80% of the people in Cunene, Angola to drought-stricken diseases. In many families, women now have to walk much further in the drought season to provide basic water and food resources for their families.

Family life in Angola is very different for women and men, as they are not treated the same. Women get paid considerably less than men for the same jobs and very rarely do women even get jobs in top positions in economic, political, and military affairs. Women are usually unqualified for these jobs as their education is not valued as highly as a man's; the literate rate for women is only 28% (EveryCulture). Men are known to go off and fight in war, while women are expected to run the household. As many men die in war, women become widowed and have now become the majority population leading by 1 million individuals(Statista). Since there are more women than men in Angola, polygamous households are common. However, this essentially led to the widespread of the AIDS virus throughout the country. This illness is estimated to affect over 190,000 people who are now HIV positive. This disease not only affects the individuals with the disease, but their children as well, since many children are left orphaned after they lose their parents to the AIDS virus. Many children are also born HIV positive due to the virus being spread from their mothers. Women have now become more important in agriculture and food trade, however, they are at a much higher risk of getting hit by land mines than men. Over 80% of land mine deaths are of women or young children(EveryCulture).

Many children in Angola do not attend daily school, and instead, accompany their mothers to work in the fields. Compulsory free education is to only attend school at the age of seven for four years, however, for many families, even these requirements are not met. Currently, the education system is so bad in Angola that it is ranked 111th in the UNESCO EDI (Educational Development Index), which makes it the country with one of the lowest levels of education in the world. The Angolan government estimated that approximately two million children do not attend school(Dunn). The Civil War completely destroyed areas where classrooms existed, and the government has yet to rebuild these areas. With very minimal areas for children to be educated, it makes it extremely difficult for children to receive a proper education. Through a study done by the Borgen Project, it was found that of the 17,000 teachers the government employs, over 40% are underqualified for their position(Dunn). The Angola government With only 0.7% of children pursuing a university degree, the problem of lack of education continues to perpetuate, as no effective solution is called into place. The lack of education leads to a high rate of unemployment, which

leads to the 70% poverty rate. The lack of education has harmful effects that affect the Angola citizens in a harmful continuous cycle.

The recent droughts that have hit Angola over the last few years have only made matters worse. The water that these citizens depended on has now been reduced to a black field of desert. Families spend hours digging for water that is dirty and unsanitary. Ana Lenode says, “Here, you have to keep fighting for water or you don’t drink or eat,”(Unicef). Tchirinho Vataleni an 18-year-old boy says he spends at least 4 hours a day in a hold digging for water; Tchirinho had dropped out of the seventh grade as his duties to help his family during the drought became overpowering. Students are forced to drop out of school to be able to find a necessary resource of water. Of the students who do attend school, teachers complain that the students are inactive and have no motivation to learn as they are extremely tired and dehydrated(Prates). The impact of the lack of education is that these students will never be able to escape poverty, as they will never receive high-paying jobs since they have little to no education experience.

While finding a solution to this detrimental problem is challenging, but it should be our foremost concern. While humanitarian organizations that have partnered with the Angola government work to solve this issue by collecting much-needed supplies for children and opening new schools, we need a much more substantial solution that will allow for more students to receive education country-wide. We first need to trace this problem back to its roots: lack of education resources and lack of proper nutritional necessities such as water.

Lack of educational resources is a problem that is already being fought against to solve, however, much more emphasis is needed to ensure positive results. While organizations such as Unicef, Inda Cares, and Develop Africa help send school supplies to schools, there first needs to be a newfound focus on educating these children on the importance of school and its long-term effects. Many students stopped seeing school as a priority, and this is the main reason many families are stuck in the poverty cycle. If more emphasis was put on these organizations educating and inspiring these students what their futures could potentially look like if they were to go to college and get a university degree, more students would be motivated to attend school. Humanitarian organizations should also shift their focus to motivating more affluent countries to donate capital and essential supplies. If these organizations offered incentives to affluent countries, more of them would be prompted to offer donations to places such as Angola.

Lack of nutritional resources ties back to the effects of the drought. As more children and families spend their days searching for water, the amount of focus they put on education declines. Water and food are

two of the most basic necessities needed for survival, so it is the government's responsibility to provide its citizens with these resources. However, it once again comes back to the lack of capital and resources the Angola government has, therefore, it is the humanitarian organization's responsibility to provide the government with needed capital. The government could then use this money to construct wells or watering areas for families to receive water from. Also, there needs to be more organization and attention brought to the rural parts of Angola. Over one-third of the country is part of the rural population(Macrotrends). The importance of food security is brought into focus as we can see how the lack of nutritional aspects forces families into poverty and prevent them from receiving much-needed education. However, the main change begins with our generation of students who live in wealthier countries. The resources that we, in affluent countries, waste daily such as food and water can feed many families living in poverty. Our generation needs to become more educated to minimize the amount of natural resource wastage that we induce in the future to be able to provide more resources to families living in third-world countries. More focus on how to minimize wastage needs to be emphasized in schools to prevent us from following the same patterns that we now partake in, for the future.

Education is a primary concern for many countries, however, in Angola, they face so many food security and dehydration issues, that the importance of education has diminished in their society. To help them make strides in solving this issue, affluent societies such as ours, need to help provide other third-world countries with the resources they need. While we take learning the quadratic formula and the pythagorean theorem for granted, unfortunately not all children across the world can say the same.

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