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Tanzania, Factor 15: Human Rights
Women's farming rights in Tanzania

For an average citizen growing up in America today, it may be surprising to know that not all women in the world are treated as equals to their male counterparts. No matter how much the average citizen would not want to believe this statement, it is true. Women in some parts of the world are viewed as lesser human beings compared to men. In African countries, women are held back in many ways that the women from more industrialized countries may take for granted. One example could be access to financial resources, such as banking and financial investment opportunities for business situations. The road blocks that banks impose on African women include the need for a literate male guarantor. Literacy is another setback that women in Africa face. The literacy ratio based on gender in Tanzania is 75.5 percent of males to 60.8 percent of females. This means that about 40 percent of women in this African country are denied financial help due to an uncontrolled lack of education. The majority of the women in Tanzania are farmers, and the lack of their financial independence affects farm productivity. Women mainly work on family-ran farms, and the women's lower status in the household prevents them from making decisions about the fields in which they work every day. Men think of women as lower human beings than themselves and only respect a woman in regard to the children they give birth to. In more industrialized societies, this is not in any way acceptable. However, in a country such as Tanzania, this is a normal concept.

Tanzania is a nation on the continent of Africa residing just below the equator at the exact location of -5.6944 degrees south and 36.3223 degrees east. Tanzania takes up about 947, 300 square feet of land comprised of coastal and central plateau terrain. The climate in Tanzania varies depending on location. If a Tanzanian lives near the coast, then they will most likely be experiencing a tropical climate. If a Tanzanian lives inland around the central plateau, then the climate would be more temperate ("World Factbook"). Tanzania's temperatures based by season are nearly the exact opposite of what one would find in a place such as the United States. In what would be the warmest months in the U.S, June through October would be the coolest months in Tanzania, and what would be the coolest months in the U.S would be the warmest months in Tanzania, December through March.

Tanzania with a population of 48,261,942 is considered to be one of the poorest countries in the world. It has, however, been improving its economy with its improvements on gold production and tourism. These aspects alone though will not improve Tanzania's economy to a glorified state unless improvements in agriculture are taken seriously. The economy depends on agriculture in Tanzania, providing eighty five percent of exports and employing approximately two thirds of the work force, the agriculture sector is a big deal ("World Factbook"). However, major setbacks in things such as gender equality among farmers, are keeping Tanzania from the economic and food stability that are so close to being in their grasp.

A typical rural family of agriculture in Tanzania is larger because generations of family members have to live and work together under one household. This type of system is called a clan or a tribe. The elders of the group are often main leaders and contribute to their group by settling disputes between members. Traditionally families in Tanzania continue the custom of arranged marriages; however this practice is becoming less common in today's society. Wives in the Tanzanian household are usually not in an authoritative position and they earn respect through their children. Tanzanian women are not even considered to be mature until they have given birth to a healthy child. Education of children within Tanzanian families is entirely based on the income of the parents and if they can afford to send their children to school. If the family can afford to send both sons and daughters to school then they would

most likely do so, but if they are not making a sufficient enough income the daughter's education is usually the sacrifice so the son can be able to attend school.

A typical Tanzanian family meal consists of a carb such as corn, rice, sorghum, or plantains. However the preparation may differ based on where the family is living in Tanzania. For example, Plantains are preferred in the northwest and a mash of corn and sorghum called ugali is more common in the central and southwestern areas of Tanzania ("Tanzania"). These carbohydrate portions of a family meal also consist of some sort of meat or vegetable. It is believed that a typical Tanzanian family eats in a healthier fashion than a majority of the world, so long as those food items are available to them.

A smallholder farm in Tanzania is in average between .9 hectares and 3.0 hectares ("Tanzania Agriculture Sector"). The typical staple produce farmed by Tanzanian farmers include maize, sorghum, millet, rice, wheat, pulses (primarily beans), cassava, potatoes, bananas, and plantains. The process of farming on a farm in Tanzania is not typically easy, many Tanzanians only have access to poor working tools such as small hand hoes and pangas (large broad bladed knife that can be used as a cutting instrument). Beneficial techniques are used in farming that have been adopted from the modern ways of farming such as, applying agro chemicals. Other aspects of Tanzanian farming such as storage methods, weeding, planting, and transportation are also in need of improvement, but strategies to improve these aspects have been put into place. On these farms in Tanzania women do a majority of the work and are unfortunately underappreciated and under compensated for their large role in agriculture.

In rural households the average percent of income derived from agricultural activities is thought to be seventy percent (Cavarrubias, Nsiima, and Zezza). Continuing on with the previous statement on average fifty three percent of households derive seventy five percent or above of their income from family farming also known as self-employed farming (Cavarrubias, Nsiima, and Zezza). In Tanzania eighty percent of the entire labor force is comprised of work in the agriculture field. Considering that a majority of Tanzania's economy is based on the progress of agriculture, Tanzania's poverty rate is thought to be fairly low. However, this is not the case with thirty six percent of Tanzania's population below the poverty line, which is unfortunate considering agricultural laborers make up such a large percentage of the workforce a majority of these people are most likely in the agriculture field ("World Factbook").

In Tanzania some things that set their country back as a whole are lack of the proper ability to transport goods to portions of the country, the HIV-AIDS epidemic, child labor and unemployment of child laborers, risk of shipping exports from the country and imports in, due to Somali pirates furthering their piracy tactics into the south, and lack of gender equality especially within the farming industry. Transporting goods can be an issue in generally specific locations across Tanzania. The main issue with transportation of goods is that rural citizens of Tanzania do not have the funds necessary to pay for transport from farms and villages. The HIV-AIDS epidemic leaves many gravely ill and kills many others every year. HIV-AIDS is just one disease out of many that could be prevented if Tanzania had a better health care system. Tanzania's ratio of physicians to the population of Tanzania is .001 physicians to every 1,000 citizens. This compared to America's physician ratio of 2.42 physicians to every 1,000 citizens shows that the access Tanzanian citizens have to health care is very poor ("World Factbook"). Tanzania has a fairly large number of child laborers consisting of 2,815,085 this converts to twenty one percent of the Tanzanian youth working as child laborers ("World Factbook"). Just as there are many employed child laborers in Tanzania there are many unemployed child laborers, the unemployment rate among Tanzania's youth is 7.1 percent in ages fifteen through twenty four. All the previous stated issues are very important issues involving Tanzania, but one of the biggest issues facing Tanzania currently is its lack of gender equality especially in regards to the agricultural aspect of Tanzania.

Gender equality in Tanzania is a hot topic currently being discussed within their country and on a global level. Upon researching almost any agriculture related topic in Tanzania one could easily find an article or paragraph in each search response, relating to the issue of gender equality in Tanzania and how its improvement is vital for agricultural growth there. This issue is such a large concept, because of the role women play in the productivity of farming in Tanzania. Women are so dedicated to working in the fields, that they continue work even with their babies strapped closely to their bodies in a sling called a kanga. The dedication women show to their children is an example of a literal physical restriction to women farmers in Tanzania. Other restrictions include financial restrictions, value of tools, lack of proper education, and exclusion from decision making within their smallholder farms. Due to these restrictions within the issue of gender inequality, food security in farming households and in households across Tanzania are and could continue to suffer.

A large impact that could result from the lack of gender equality in Tanzania is the production rate of important food products going down and worsening the ability to have food security in Tanzania. The absence of equality for women in Tanzania also causes an impact on the ability for families to earn a sufficient income to purchase food. If women were given the same rights as men in Tanzania, then many of the farms would improve production and produce a larger income for the rural farm families. The present issue of gender equality is at a moderate level of severity, this issue is not out of control, but it is also not headed in a direction of immense improvement. This argument over women's rights does not only leave the women of Tanzania at a disadvantage, but the entire population. Improving the lifestyles of women, would improve the lifestyles of the citizens of the country as a whole. The concept of gender equality has major potential, currently the topic is in a stand still state, but improvements do not appear to be far off in the future of Tanzania. The situation seems to have many people backing the positive outcome of equality for women, primarily people in the agriculture field looking to invest in Tanzania and improve its agricultural output. In the near future if certain changes are made to the current viewpoint on gender equality in Tanzania, then the entire country will benefit and progress in many aspects of the overall Tanzanian lifestyle.

The improvement of rights among women in Tanzania primarily concerning the agricultural aspect of their lives will lead the country towards a very positive outlook in the way of food security and production. If women were treated equally and given the right to resources that would be more readily available to a male farmer yield would very likely increase. If women could access the proper tools and financial process to improve their fields, the amount of food they produce would go up. This in turn would give families more food to eat that they produce themselves and more food to send to market, to earn the income needed to purchase other foods and goods as well as send their children to school and support their family in other ways as well.

Climate volatility is an unpredictable issue. Other major issues, such as climate volatility, also affect the way countries such as Tanzania support the lives of their citizens. In recent years the climate across the globe has been unusually unpredictable, and often times unforgiving. The climate could affect the crops in Tanzania in an entirely new aspect that cannot be entirely controlled by humans. To ensure better rights for women is a controllable issue, but the climate however is not. So making sure that one controllable issue is taken care of would ensure more focus on other unpredictable problems such as climate volatility.

There are many different approaches that could be taken in the effort to end gender inequality in Tanzania. A possible advancement in this cause could be to better educate women in the agricultural field. If women were properly educated about all aspects of the farming business, then it would be easier for men to see them as capable of giving input to farm related business. This would also put them on a level playing field, so there would be no agreeable reason for a man to underestimate a woman's ability to make decisions in their line of work. Another potential step in solving this issue is enforcing policies and

laws preventing banks and forms of financial aid from discriminating against women, so women can attempt to obtain better equipment and supplies such as better performing seeds and agro chemicals for their farms. Getting major companies to implement guidelines on and to persuade male farmers in areas such as Tanzania to help women learn and get involved in agriculture decision making is another aspect that should be considered. Attempts should be made to bring in volunteers from agronomy businesses to train women in farming related aspects and involve women in research of different agricultural products.

To solve this issue many people would need to be on board and be very willing to help in constructing policies and program for the benefit of women in agriculture and Tanzania as an entity. Volunteers would be needed and followers of this change would be needed in order to persuade large businesses in helping the cause. Spreading the word of the mistreatment of women taking place in Tanzania would be vital to solving gender discrimination against women and creating better lives for the people of Tanzania. Using social media websites would be an interesting way to get people involved in the situation, and being vocal about the issue will make more people want to get involved and help better the women of Tanzania. Getting big businesses to invest in the people of Tanzania would also be vital to the cause. A good selling point for getting businesses involved is the prospective idea of the positive outcome of this movement being able to benefit the future of those big businesses as well. Families of Tanzania have a very important and impactful role in what happens with a potential women's rights movement. Society would have to accept these new customs in order for the movement to be a long-term success.

The government of Tanzania would also need to be very supportive of this change, so they could better the lives of their people. They would also be able to contribute by passing laws preventing discrimination and implementing aid to smallholder women farmers. Since 1993 there has been an organization in Tanzania known as the Tanzania Gender Networking Programme ("Tanzania Gender Networking Programme "). This organization pushes the government for things such as passing helpful laws and influencing government policies. The constitution of Tanzania actually includes equality between men and women, but despite this Tanzania still ranked 125th out of 155 on the gender related development index in 2009. Also according to the 2008 Gender Empowerment measure Tanzania is in 48th place out of the 108 that were measured ("Gender"). This goes to show that it would take quite a bit of outside work to convince the government of improving upon and supporting the constitution of Tanzania's original gender equality statements.

Students attending colleges of agriculture could create an education program for female Tanzanian farmers through study abroad programs that would take place in Tanzania. Colleges could implement this program across the United States and other countries that have a strong agricultural presence to aid the gender equality issue. The educational program would be beneficial for all parties involved. The women of Tanzania would earn the education they need to better their agricultural production and performance. It would provide a real world educational experience for agriculture students as well as a way to give back. It could benefit major agriculture corporations by building a potential client base among developing farms in Tanzania.

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation is an example of a group taking a step in helping the women of Tanzania by providing women farmers with agronomy training. The Foundation addresses gender-related attitudes that discourage women from engaging in the production of coffee. The skills women farmers learn to improve include producing a larger quantity of coffee and increasing the quality of coffee (Ben-Ari). These two things alone will result in increase of their incomes. If a situation such as this was to be replicated and generalized into production of not just coffee, but all produce in Tanzania, women would have a much better standing in the agricultural world. Creating this on a larger scale would also improve the well-being of Tanzania's food security and its people's ability to improve their lives through better incomes.

There are many different routes that can improve the current situation of the Tanzanian society. For example there must be a driving force in the battle for gender equality in order for women to have equal rights. Agriculture businesses also will need to get involved to improve the production of crops across Tanzania and thereby improving Tanzania's food security and ability to export goods. However, this is not going to happen until women's inequitable access to financial and agricultural resources become equal to men. Having equality would have a positive impact on agriculture businesses that could help Tanzanian farmers leading to more product purchases from the businesses. The government should also consider implementing financial assistance for rural farmers in the event of climate related destruction of crops, similar to crop insurance in countries such as America. Improvement of existing programs in the gender equality movement should be considered in coming years within Tanzania and could also be expanded to other areas of Africa if need be. If Tanzania improves upon the matter of gender equality in the near future, it will set an example for the rest of the countries in Africa with gender equality issues.

In conclusion, Tanzania is a country with great potential to great things especially in the world of agriculture. Changes clearly need to be made to the gender equality issue in order for the citizens to achieve these advances. The conflict of gender equality is the topic getting the most attention currently in Tanzania. Once it is dealt with in an appropriate and effective manner, then Tanzania will have more time and resources to attend to other issues that need to be improved upon. From Transportation to Health Care and everything in between Tanzania needs some fixing. Some issues just need minor touch ups, and others need to be completely rebuilt. The healing of poverty and disease stricken Tanzania will be underway once the troubles of their current lifestyles are alleviated, starting with gender equality. The future in Tanzania will be a bright one if all current important defining factors in Tanzanian lifestyle can be fixed.

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