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Uganda, Factor 16: Education

Uganda: The Improvement in Education.

“We know that a peaceful world cannot long exist, one-third rich and two-thirds hungry.” This quote by Jimmy Carter addresses the issues of hunger faced in nations all across the world. At the 1996 World Food Summit conference it was stated, “Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy lifestyle.” According to this definition of food security it is a major issue that affects the well-being of millions of people in the world. Somewhere in rural Uganda is a family of five, a father, mother, and three children who are facing issues in food security and malnutrition. Imagine yourself trying to survive living in the 20th poorest country in the world, when you receive only \$1.25 a day per person. What could you do to keep from falling into the growing number of people who suffer from malnutrition and food security? This is the key question that individuals living in Uganda ask themselves everyday.

In Uganda the number of women becoming the head of households has increased by 29-35% from 2006 to 2010. The diet of people is mainly composed of sweet potatoes, maize, and green leafy vegetables. Most diets of individuals in Uganda are poor in nutrient rich food. Due to poverty levels, the lack of adequate and nutritious conditions is prevalent in many areas of Uganda. (fao.org) Many of the people living in Uganda are malnourished because they do not have the access and availability of healthy foods. As a way of improving conditions for Ugandans, literacy programs for adults are being promoted. The Universal Primary Education (UPE) policy was put into action in 1997 and states that all children in Uganda must have some form of primary education. Before the UPE was put into action, school was very expensive and most children did not attend because of their family’s financial standings. Uganda was the first Sub-Saharan country in Africa to implement free secondary education. This helps to take care of problems that would restrict one from receiving secondary education because of personal problems such as poverty or an inadequate home lifestyle. While there is an increase in the literacy rate in Uganda, males still seem to have a higher literacy rate than females. Out of every 10 people ages 6-24 years of age in Uganda, 3 individuals do not attend school regardless of the UPE policy. Although there is a government based school in almost half of the communities in Uganda, and although this is an encouraging increase, there are still many people who do not have a school located close to their homesteads. Most individuals who attend school in Uganda walk to school, which is an average distance of 2 km away from their home. In addition, many students do not attend school in Uganda because their parents believe their children are too young to attend school even if they are 12 years old. All of these factors: poverty, lack of nutritious food, and a lack of education play into the reason of why Uganda is facing issues regarding food security in their country. (ubos.org)

There has been an increase in the availability of health facilities in Uganda, yet the average distance from a person’s home to the health facility has not decreased, and reaching medical providers is still a challenge in times of illness. The health sector in Uganda has aimed its focus on the areas of reducing morbidity and mortality in order to attain good health standards with the support of the National Health Policy (NHP) and the Health Sector Strategic Plan (HSSP). To help facilitate the access to health care for those living in Uganda the government has upgraded the health infrastructures, abolished user fees in public facilities, provided subsidies, and upgraded health training along with increasing the availability of drugs.

The percentage of people using government health centers is higher in rural areas than in urban areas. Most health centers are 5 km from those people who fall sick and need medical support. By improving

healthcare access and facilities in Uganda, the health of individuals living there can be improved, and the number of deaths for young children will be decreased. (ubos.org)

A typical size of a farm in Uganda is 2.5 hectares which is the equivalent of approximately 6 acres. (Ronner, 9) The typical rural farm family grows crops ranging from sweet potatoes, to sorghum, groundnuts, and even in some cases coffee beans. (U.S. Library of Congress, 1) On rural farms in Uganda farmers raise pigs, goats, and chickens which as well as being a food source, also provides a form of social security due to their value. (Iowa State University) Agricultural practices used by farmers include seed security, climate change adaptation, ecological land use, and indigenous knowledge systems. (pelumuganda.org) Having knowledge about these agricultural practices helps farmers in rural Uganda enhance their agricultural productivity. Most of the families are capable of growing gardens for themselves; however, trying to have successful outcomes from the growth of food is unpredictable and does not always have the best results due to weather, pests, and other kinds of damage. Since there is no guarantee that people who grow a garden in Uganda will have a positive outcome, many of the people do not spend their time or limited amount of money on growing a garden.

There are barriers involved in improving agricultural productivity, employment and earning a living wage, and gaining access to food markets and adequate nutrition. Due to factors such as distance that must be traveled and the large number of poverty cases in Uganda it is difficult to see improvement in the country. These factors make a difference in improving those areas because people must overcome many obstacles that make a huge difference in the lives of people in Uganda. Individuals in Uganda who are not adequately educated about their diet and how to produce healthy food pose a problem for their population. While education is being promoted and is increasing in Uganda, there are still many barriers because of the number of people who do not attend school, and even while at school those individuals may not be learning the information that would help them take steps toward living a healthier lifestyle.

The factor that I selected, education, affects agricultural productivity in Uganda. By educating those who live in Uganda about agriculture and ways to improve their diets and health, they will be able to positively affect their lifestyles. With growing support for education in Uganda there are great opportunities present to help increase the knowledge of healthier lifestyles. As people are educated about agricultural practices, they are able to take into their own hands a way to grow crops that could then provide them vital nutrients needed in their everyday lives. Education affects the agricultural productivity in Uganda in another way because if people living in Uganda are not informed of the steps they need to take to work towards producing food, they will not know how to overcome the challenges of malnutrition and hunger that both pose major problems in their country.

Currently there is a huge push for education and attendance in schools in Uganda. However, the education plans do not include lifestyle skills, diet plans, or any other aspects that would assist in the steps towards a healthier life. Rural areas are at a particular disadvantage because of the distance people must travel in order to attend schools. Those who live in urban areas only travel a small distance to get an education. Developing countries are also at a disadvantage because those countries do not have as strong of an education system or a tradition for education as developed countries do. Therefore, this causes many problems in those countries such as the distance that must be traveled and the quality of the education that is being provided to people in the developing countries.

The trends for the education factor are currently improving in Uganda. The trends for this factor are measured by how many individuals are attending schools, and how many schools are present in Uganda. With growing numbers of schools and the number of individuals attending schools, the situation is starting to change. Yet although there is an increase in the number of schools in Uganda and in attendance the problem surfaces because there are no healthy lifestyle skills being included within the school curriculum. This is where the problem surfaces because even though there is an increase in the attendance in schools in Uganda, the individuals who attend are not given skills that would enhance their personal

lives. The situation for our rural farm has the opportunity to improve yet there are steps that must be taken to ensure the improvement of our farm. For example, kids must be able to attend a school that is closer to their rural farm. At these schools they need to provide plans that will teach the individuals how to raise crops that would improve their diets, and they could also provide information on healthy lifestyles and how to obtain them. If these steps are taken in Uganda, then the situation for our rural farm will only get better.

By improving the education in Uganda, the amount and quality of food in Uganda will increase and benefit my family if I were a Ugandan, and we will also gain and have a better understanding of the skills and knowledge that is required to improve food conditions which will then enhance our lifestyles. Resolving the problem that the education curriculum does not include healthy lifestyle skills and how to enhance your diets, then many individuals will know how to go about growing food that enhances their lives. With improved health curriculums in Uganda schools, individuals will learn how to grow crops that provide many nutrients that boost their diets and allow them to have a healthier lifestyle. By providing more schools in Uganda, more of the individuals living in rural settings will be able to access education because they will no longer have to travel a far distance to learn steps toward bettering their lives. As the education in Uganda improves so will many other factors that affect people in Uganda, such as poverty, food production, and also security of food. Without being educated, no one in Uganda will know how to improve the growing problem of hunger and malnutrition. Many factors will be improved in Uganda when the education system contains the proper information that teaches individuals about healthy diet and lifestyles.

Other major issues such as population growth and urbanization will affect my chosen factor of education because with a population growth there will be more people to attend schools in Uganda, and with growing numbers of people who need to be educated, more schools will then be built to help with the increasing demand for education. With population growth comes also the benefit of more individuals being taught the skills necessary to improve crop growth and other factors that improve an individual's health. As urbanization increases in Uganda more people have the opportunity to attend a school that is close to their home and provides knowledge that assists them in their goal towards a healthier life where they will not have to worry about malnutrition or getting access to food. Overall not many major issues would have a negative effect on the factor of education in Uganda. In the decades ahead the major issues of population growth and urbanization will benefit the well being of my Uganda family and the surrounding communities. A growth in people and in urbanization are just positives for the education system in Uganda. With both factors more people will be educated about the need for better nutrition and how to go about accessing it to help prevent further health problems. As the education system in Uganda improves and includes more healthy lifestyle factors, the individuals in Uganda will be able to take responsibility for improving their lives and decrease the number of people who face malnutrition and worry about food security in Uganda.

I recommend that to improve the food security in Uganda, for my rural family and also for the urban families, the education systems must be improved. Education is the key goal to making changes in any situation, and this is especially true for the food security problem that is affecting people in Uganda. To help solve this situation by 2015, I suggest that Uganda's head officials look at the Quality Education in Developing Countries program provided through the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. Under this program the foundation focus' on improving education in certain countries, including Uganda. The program believes that individuals who are properly educated have better economic opportunities, higher agricultural productivity, and better health. Even with growing numbers in school attendance in Uganda, this does not always mean that those individuals are acquiring a good understanding of even the most basic skills taught in schools. Also to have more children attend schools in Uganda there should be incentives to attend such as a healthy meal or fresh clean water provided to them while they are learning. While working with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Hewlett Foundation's Global Development

and Population Program focuses on the significant changes that need to be made in education within the developing countries curriculums. With the assistance of the Quality Education in Developing Countries (QEDC), these changes in the education systems could be accomplished in only a short period of time. With Uganda being one of the countries included in the Quality Education in Developing Countries program, they are able to start improving their education system. However, they are not yet at the point where they include enough information about agriculture practices and healthy lifestyles to make a difference in the lives of people who live in Uganda. To assist these organizations to take the next step against fighting hunger through education there must be support from others. Aristotle once said, "The ultimate value of life depends upon awareness and the power of contemplation rather than upon mere survival."

Local projects could be scaled up successfully to include those provided by the Quality Education in Developing Countries program. These projects include taking steps toward improving the quality of education of agricultural practices and dietary information. Through these steps Uganda schools and the attendees would get the most benefits from the education that is being provided throughout Uganda (hewlett.org). America student teacher programs for those individuals planning on majoring in education, there could also be an option to complete student teaching in Uganda. Through money provided from grants, these teachers would have the opportunity to do their student teaching abroad, in such countries as Uganda where they need improvement and assistance in their education system. This is a benefit to not only the Uganda school system and overall education being provided, but also to those who are wanting to go into the teaching profession. These individuals will have a wonderful opportunity to teach students in other countries, which will provide them with memories to last a lifetime, while also benefiting others along the way. In neighboring countries such as Kenya, there is free primary education (FPE) offered to individuals who attend school. With this change in the Kenyan education system there has been an increase in enrollment numbers. Compared to Uganda, Kenya's academic institutions are more developed and have had a great response with attendance being at 86% since the FPE has been put into action.

I suggest that in implementing my recommendations in Uganda that the communities, national government, and the Quality Education in Developing Countries program work together in improving the quality of the education being provided in the Uganda schools. Rural farms and urban families should be involved as key players in implementing these recommendations to ensure that they receive the full benefit from the improvements they are trying to include. They should all work together in order that they could have the best outcome from the new programs and improvements that they are being provided to the Uganda school education system. With the communities informing the government and improvement programs about what needs to be done to improve the quality of education that is provided the education will only get better. As the community tells the government what needs to be changed and included within the school education system, the government can then inform the Quality Education in Developing Countries program of how they can help assist in the changes that need to be made at the community level. Then schools can provide the best information in order to have a positive impact on the lives of people in Uganda. The Hewlett Foundation's Global Development and Population Program provides grants to assist countries in the improvement of factors such as hunger and education. In 2013 they disbursed \$240,100,000 through grants. By applying and receiving a grant, the country of Uganda would have better resources to tackle the issue of hunger and use education to overcome this. The timeline of this project would ultimately be up to the country of Uganda and how strongly it approaches and tackles the issue of hunger and using education as a tool to solve it. If handled at a rapid speed and done in the right way, these recommendations could be put into effect and be working in the Uganda school system in the next 5 year. Without a speedy approach and taking it head on, it could be up to ten maybe even twenty years before there is a change in the Uganda area. As science fiction writer Isaac Asimov once said, "It is change, continuing change, inevitable change, that is the dominant factor in society today. No sensible decision can be made any longer without taking into account not only the world as it is, but the world as it will be."

Although education does not seem like a factor that would make a major difference in the lives of people in Uganda it really does make an impact. Perhaps Anthony J.D.' Angelo says it best, why education is a vital key in making improvements in any sector, "Develop a passion for learning. If you do, you will never cease to grow." In this case education is vital in teaching the people of Uganda about how to grow crops that will improve their diets, so they will no longer face the issue of malnutrition or even food security. Individuals in Uganda who are educated about the steps needed to maintain a healthy lifestyle and diet are only bettering their futures and eliminating the chance of issues that would negatively impact their lives. Instead of children in America complaining about going to school, maybe they should look at it as a great opportunity to better themselves. Many individuals in poor and developing countries do not have the chance to attend school, and this then limits their ability for a better life. Education can make a huge difference, especially in the lives of individuals living in Uganda who battle everyday against the dangerous and growing factors of malnutrition and food security.

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