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*Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day.
Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.*

A Chinese Proverb

In September 2000 society's attention was drawn to certain social and economic issues impacting us on a global scale through the development of the United Nations' Millennium Goals (MDG). The purpose of the Millennium Development Goals is to eradicate poverty, hunger, disease, gender inequality, child mortality, illiteracy, and environmental damage (Docalavich 10). Although these issues have been addressed and are, indeed, evident in developing nations, we can invest time in encouraging entrepreneurship and self-sufficiency through a long-term commitment to providing the skills and resources necessary to sustain life. Did you know that 925 million will suffer from chronic hunger this year? Did you know that females constitute 53% of children that are not in school? Did you know malaria kills a child every 45 seconds? Did you know that the official development assistance to developing nations is currently around \$126 billion which is still not enough?

An advantageous approach to dealing with poverty would be to improve access to microfinance. Microfinance facilitates lending to individuals in developing nations that are unable to procure financing through traditional banks. Organizations such as the Grameen Bank and KIVA.org process these loans for individuals, companies, high schools, and other academic institutions that want to become involved in lending. The concept of microfinance was created by Nobel Peace Prize Winner Dr. Muhammad Yunus in 1976. He later founded the Grameen Bank, located in Bangladesh, which is a financial institution that practices microfinance by lending to poor individuals in rural areas. It is a great tool because it empowers individuals living in countries with the lowest GDPs to become financially stable which ultimately leads to economic growth. Since banks consider "poor people" to be extreme credit risks, the underprivileged have little or no access to financial services. Microfinance should be practiced being that it provides loans strictly for the purpose of creating self-employment for the poor, thus enabling the poor to build their own microenterprises and move themselves out of poverty.

Burundi, a developing nation in Eastern Africa, is amongst the ten poorest countries in the world. Several factors such as gender and cultural discrimination, limited access to credit, and insecurity of property rights contribute to the fact that multitudes of the nation's people are languishing in poverty. Less than half of Burundi's land is used for permanent crops. Burundi sporadically faces lack of precipitation or excessive precipitation which leads to issues such as crop failure, arid land, and droughts; also, soil erosion is an effect of deforestation, over farming, and overgrazing (Profile-Burundi"). The nation's undulating land is predominately inhabited by two ethnic groups: the Hutu and the Tutsi. Civil upheaval has arisen between the two groups for years and they presently have an antagonistic relationship. The Tutsis, dominating the military and the government, have used their authority to inflict harm and even murder the Hutus. There have been instances in which Hutus have been elected into governmental positions but in numerous cases this has resulted in the assassination of Hutu leaders. This ethnic warfare has been present in Burundi since its independence in 1962 and has, in turn, led to an insufficient amount of supplies, food, and medicine. Disease is also a prominent issue in Burundi. Dissatisfactory sanitation and an inadequate amount of clean water have caused diseases such as Malaria, Typhoid, and AIDS etc. with Malaria being the most staggering of them all. Healthcare is only provided to those who have a job therefore making it impossible for a bulk of the nation's people to receive proper medical care. Furthermore, the lack of education means there is a small amount of qualified doctors to aid the nation's current health issues ("Burundi").

Aside from Burundi's metropolitan capital, it is mainly rural. A typical Burundian family's diet consists mainly of beans and root crops such as sweet potatoes and cassava. Burundi has many single-parent and child-headed households because of the spread of AIDS. Families are highly reliant on subsistence farming. In the countryside, people usually skip breakfast, eating just two meals a day. Generally, food is eaten for sustenance not pleasure. ("Republic of Burundi") Although education is free, there still is an expense for books and uniforms. Those very expenses are not affordable to send children to school and if it does happen to be affordable then many households send only their sons to school.

Women have limited property rights; they can receive a small plot of land until they get married or die. Widowed women can't inherit land from their dead husbands and this often results in them finding other means of producing income. For example, many women slide into prostitution for economic survival. The daughters of widowed women tend to drop out of school or do not attend at all. They marry prematurely, often as a second or third wife, because there is too much poverty at home to purchase food. ("Armed Violence Against Women"). Insecurity of property rights leads to increasingly impoverished lives. These unequal rights require many to eventually lead alternative lifestyles which often include degrading ways of making money and a struggling to acquire sufficient sustenance.

A serious issue in Burundi is the limited access to credit. As a result, individuals are not given much of an opportunity to pull themselves out of poverty let alone pull themselves out of the troubles poverty is accompanied by. Families that are poor obviously have a low income. Financial institutions are, for the most part, reluctant to lend to those who have low incomes because they are considered to be a potential credit risk. Without credit, a primary weapon against hunger and poverty, poor individuals are either vulnerable to food insecurity or victims of food insecurity.

Gender and cultural discrimination cause unfairness in the workforce and unfair distribution of wealth. An enormous amount of women do not qualify for mid-level or high level positions because they are not given the same educational opportunities as men and for that reason, lack the education needed for higher level jobs. Although discrimination is not authorized by law, it still exists due to corrupt government practices. Let us remember that females constitute more than half of children that are not in school. This is a blatant exemplification of gender discrimination. Women, just like men, are capable of obtaining an education and bringing prosperity to a country but the nation's people must be willing to allow change of the traditional roles of women.

Particular factors are currently widespread in Burundi and are severely detrimental to the nation's inhabitants: gender and cultural discrimination, limited access to credit, insecurity of property rights. The environment is being degraded because of poor sanitation, over farming, soil erosion, etc. Women are disadvantaged because they are treated differently than the opposite sex; in other words, they are not given the same opportunities for success as a result of unchanging traditions and corrupt government. Developing nations as a whole are, without a doubt, disadvantaged because they tend to have high rates of illiteracy, minimal education, healthcare, and nutrition, political and/or ethnic upheaval, and instability of agricultural production. All of those characteristics of a developing nation are the cause of food insecurity among people. Is there enough being done to change the situation?

The amount of income could absolutely be increased so that families in developing nations can buy sufficient amounts of food to nourish their families. A logical proposition to solve the factors contributing to poverty would be to *teach a man to fish* rather than to *give a man a fish that feeds him for a day*. In other words, teaching an individual the skills needed to increase income especially by way of entrepreneurship, is far more effective and long-lasting than just providing food.

The government has no effective mechanism in place for dealing with the many widespread problems that affect the country: disease, illiteracy, water scarcity, pollution, and population growth ("Burundi"). Education is needed to increase literacy rates. Education is needed to give skill to individuals so we can

have an adequate amount of teachers to teach the children and have more than enough medical professionals to cure illnesses in a country where disease is so rampant. A higher literacy rate can only be beneficial to individuals within a country. Knowing how to read can open so many doors for success in the country and lead to a bright, promising future.

Burundi is a small country with a large population: about seven million people. Most Burundians, especially in rural areas, lack access to clean drinking water. Since many rural inhabitants are outside Regideso's water supply grid, they have to resort to getting water from lakes, rivers and swamps. Some have to resort to unsafe sources due to the high cost of water. Surprisingly, the scarce resource of water is being squandered by pipes that have busted and pipes that remain unrepaired leaking day and night. Burundi's 13 year long civil war seriously damaged Regideso's assets and has limited the utility's ability to provide services ("BURUNDI: Poor management...").

A great approach to solving problems in the developing nation of Burundi would be to use the "complexity-simplicity" ideology. In other words, some of the simplest actions have the most complex, life-changing results. For example, an obvious issue affecting income and food security is gender and cultural discrimination. There have already been laws passed that are supposed to ensure that women have equal rights as men but it sadly does not work out that way. All it would take is willingness to change traditions and the elimination of governmental corruption that is currently preventing women from reaching their full potential. Governmental corruption affects different ethnic groups as well. The Hutus are discriminated against by the Tutsis and they have had a hostile relationship for years. The government and military dominating Tutsis must come to the realization that being bellicose and causing war is detrimental to the well-being of the nation's peoples. There are many who promote peace; in fact, Burundians place great importance on *ubushingantahe*, the ability to resolve conflicts impartially ("Republic of Burundi"). Communities have to take it upon themselves to make a change otherwise there will be no improvement in the economy and the nation's future.

Inadequate land tenure systems remain a problem in Burundi. Land is becoming increasingly valuable because of rising demand for food and agro fuels, for minerals, for tourism, and for ecosystem services including carbon sequestration. Land confers political and societal power as well as wealth. Property rights regimes typically address four types of land rights: the right to use it; the right to manage and transform it; the right to transfer one's rights; and the right to own it. In Eastern Africa, land tenure and policy reforms that have been implemented so far have largely been inadequate and have been fraught with poorly defined property rights. Insecure land tenure systems have led to unequal control over land and inequitable access to land resources fuelling tensions between land user groups as well as severe conflicts over different land uses thus constraining farmer innovation and investment in agriculture, and access to land by pastoralists. This situation aggravates poverty through serious impacts upon food security, environmental sustainability and social security. Women's insecurity of property rights have been entrenched by most land laws conferring land titles and inheritance rights upon male family members only with females being dependants. Women have been denied the necessary skills and tools and have no decision making powers on farms despite tilling the land. Laws declaring gender equality should be established. Women given secure property rights would be favorable to agricultural productivity and food security ("Enhancing Food Security").

Microfinance needs to be further enhanced for Burundian citizens. If microfinance is used to finance mostly agricultural activities it can make the purchase of seeds, fertilizers, and other agricultural resources possible. Having the necessary resources, Burundians will be able to improve the production of crops and become less vulnerable to food insecurity.

Food insecurity can be caused by many diverse factors such as gender and cultural discrimination, limited access to credit, and insecurity of property rights. Those very factors tend to overwhelm affected people and communities as well as policy-makers ("Enhancing Food Security"). The best way to go about

helping a nation from experiencing periodic food crises is by teaching marketable skills for agricultural enhancement through promotion of youth entrepreneurship and stimulating farming innovations. This must include targeted education and outreach programs to promote self-sufficiency. As a result, individuals will become empowered to increase control over resources. They will possess a higher self-esteem, and can pass those skills down to younger generations.

Not only is it important to attain marketable skills but it is also important for financial institutions to be willing to facilitate lending. If the goals of improving access to credit and encouraging entrepreneurship are accomplished then it would give individuals the marketable skills to attain necessary resources, become agriculturally successful, purchase and sell goods and services, pay back loans and ultimately increase sustainable income. There would actually exist a strong circular flow of economic activity which will ultimately lead to a higher standard of living for all of society.

As we all know, entrepreneurs need customers to make profits and as long as people are making money, the entrepreneurs will receive business. With Burundi's plethora of natural attractions they can attract tourists and sell foods, fabrics, crafts, etc. The possibilities are endless and once that has been understood by the people of Burundi, they can take matters into their own hands and increase their nation's gross domestic product. Yes there are numerous ways in which we can aid Burundi but to reach prosperity there must be change in their traditions. Of course microfinance and the teaching and practicing of self-sufficiency will help with achieving the Millennium Development Goals but is it enough? The people of Burundi have to do their part by allowing change and letting go of outdated beliefs and other traditions that prohibit many capable individuals from reaching their full potential from lack of opportunity. The best thing we can do is find various ways to help them help themselves. Remember the ancient Chinese proverb: *Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.*

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