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A Better Uganda, A Better World

Imagine living in a world where you do not know where your next meal will come from, or if you will even have one. You do not know where you can find clean and drinkable water. In this world, you will walk miles to get water, but the water is diseased and will make you sick. You continuously worry about catching one of these fatal diseases, and once you're sick, the hospitals are not sanitary. You live in a world filled with fear, uncertainty, hardship, disease, disaster, and death. For many of us whom live in developed countries, such as America, the idea of that kind of world is unimaginable. There is a country in Africa, though, where this nightmare is reality. Uganda is a developing country where a healthy lifestyle is not common; sanitary foods and water are hard to encounter, diseases are widespread, and death rates are high. Many of the Ugandans do not have help facing the problems. The problems are getting worse and do not have a foreseeable end. This is the time to step in and help, while the problems are still restorable.

The Ugandan's idea of an average family differs from the American's idea of an average family. In Uganda, an average family consists of ten members; in America, the average household consists of three people ("Questions"; "Men"). A pair of Ugandan parents can have up to seven to nine children, who all live in the same household. Oftentimes, a family will live in a village that consists of many of their extended family members ("Questions"). A family in Uganda is much larger than a family in America.

In reference to diet, Ugandans do not have much to choose from for meal options. Many meals consist of only carbohydrates and some proteins. This does not allow for a balanced diet consisting of all the foods, such as fruit and vegetables, which are needed for proper nutrition. They eat these same foods for nearly every meal, every day ("Questions"). They will drink water with their meals, but the water is not purified. The unpurified water is common for many Ugandans ("Irby"). Their diet is not as varied and comprehensive as the average American's, nor is it as healthy.

A cause of their non-nutritional diet is their farm sizes. Over eighty percent of Ugandan households rely upon their own farming for their diet. On average, one household owns 1.3 hectares of land, which is only 3.2 acres. An average family farm size in America is one-hundred sixty acres. This small allotment of land does not allow for cattle, so many Ugandans keep goats instead. Their goats, however, produce little milk and in short periods of time; their low yield of milk does not support the household ("Uganda Farm"). There are many very productive plants in Uganda, such as their main crop, cassava. Cassava is a starch that grows well in Uganda's soil and climate ("Uganda Hunger"). There are other starchy, productive crops, such as millet, plantain, sorghum, corn, groundnut, sweet potatoes, and beans. Families do not have much land, but the land that they do have is used by their starchy, but productive, crops (Uganda Country").

Many of the Ugandans do not practice modern uses of agriculture technology. Over ninety-five percent of all Ugandan farmers claim that they do not use fertilizers, improved seeds, and other modern technologies for agriculture. More than seventy-five percent of all Ugandan farmers claimed to not use any kind of advanced seeds. Eighty-five percent of the farmers said that they did not use hybrid seeds, and ninety-three percent of farmers do not use herbicides. Because of their lack of advanced technologies, statistics show that it takes nearly four acres to produce what one acre would produce in the developed world (“Kale”).

Other food sources can be found in their livestock and other animals, but those are also not as healthy as they should be. Ninety-four and a half percent of farmers are not using improved animal feeds in Uganda. Seventy-five and two-tenths percent are not treating the animals with medicines (“Kale”). The animals are given the water that the humans drink, which is contaminated and unpurified; the unpurified water often leads to illnesses. When these contaminated animals are consumed, the illnesses are transferred to the person who consumed it; in turn, the health of the animal affects the health of the human (“Building”).

Of the Ugandans who claimed to not use advanced agriculture and veterinary technologies, about thirty-five percent gave the reason that they did not know how to use them. About thirty percent gave the reason that the technologies were unaffordable. Another common reason was that they were unavailable. Ugandans do not improve their farming because they are either uneducated in relevance of the technologies, or the technologies are unavailable to them (“Kale”).

Education needs to improve before their lives can improve. Farming should be part of the Ugandan public education’s curriculum because that is the life of many of its children. A suggested curriculum would include education about diseases and disease prevention. Farming, soil, and the prevention of soil erosion would allow for a bigger crop yield. Small engine structure and repair education would help Ugandans utilize more technologies. It is important for all Ugandans to have education concerning livestock. Simple architecture, such as carpentry and brick laying would allow Ugandans to have a more secure home. Civics and history education would prevent same bad events from repeating and it would allow for a better future. The basics of business would be needed in their education to allow some children from rural child lives to go into business if they desired. Education is important because the children are the future of Uganda (“Twesigye”).

The income a person makes is based upon their occupation. The type of work Ugandans have range from farming, which most of the country’s citizens are, to business work in the towns. The average income per person is six thousand shillings a day; this is just two dollars and forty-three cents in an American dollar (“Analysis”). This is not enough to support their large families, but it is above the poverty line set by international organizations. Thirty-one percent of the Ugandan population is under the international poverty line (“Uganda Farm”). Income is an issue for many Ugandan families.

Their lack of knowledge about technologies, along with other factors, has contributed to a low productivity of crops. The Ugandan soil is fertile and they have a good amount of rain. They lack knowledge of modern farming technology, which leads to a low productivity rate and poor use of the land. Other barriers that prevent the improvement of agriculture include finances, lack of crops and materials, and the organization of their crops (Bahigwa, Rosetti”). Many of the crops that do grow are

diseased; most of their water is also diseased (“Irby”).

The contaminated water sources have therefore become their leading problem. As the diseased water or diseased food source is consumed and spread, it has become a leading cause of death. Seventy-five percent of all premature deaths are disease-caused; these diseases are often preventable, meaning the death was too (“Building”). A reason for the contamination of water is the lack of human waste facilities in Uganda. Many of the Ugandans will simply waste in a bush or on the ground, which will eventually find its way into the drinking water source. They do not have water purification systems established in most of their villages, so the Ugandans will often consume the contaminated water (“Irby”).

The water is not only directly consumed by the population, but is given to the animals, and used for farming and plants, both of which are then consumed by the humans. This explains how the diseases found in crops and animals are transferred (“Irby”). Common diseases among the Ugandan population include bacterial diarrhea, typhoid fever, and hepatitis A, which are all food borne, water borne, or blood borne illnesses. Schistosomiasis is a common disease from contact with contaminated water. These diseases could be significantly reduced or prevented if the Ugandans were given supplies and education; many deaths could be prevented if these diseases were eradicated (“Ugandan Demographic”).

When a Ugandan becomes sick, access to health care is not always easy. On average, each district only has one hospital; each district consists of a population ranging from thirty-seven thousand to over one million (“Questions”; “Districts”). The hospitals are often not held to the same sanitation standards as America. This is the leading cause for high child mortality rates. Of every thousand children under five in Uganda, one-hundred and thirty-seven die. The birthing experience also leads many mothers’ deaths; of every one-hundred thousand child births, four-hundred and thirty-five mothers die in the process. Decreasing the child mortality rates and maternal health is part of the Millennium Development Goals that are needed to be met by 2015; neither goal is expected to be met by the deadline because hygiene in the hospitals is not improving. The hospitals do not have the pharmaceutical technology needed, either. Hospitals will need to be improved to better the quality of life for all Ugandans (“Uganda Data”).

Eighty-six percent of all Ugandans rely on farming for income (“Uganda Farm”). Oftentimes, the farmers do not have the same education as those with other careers, meaning majority of this eighty-six percent do not have a twelve year education (“Questions”). Though girls will go to school for some time, it is often for a shorter length of time as the male children. The length of time depends on the situation of the family. When the parents cannot afford to send all of their children to school, they will keep the girls home and send the boys to school. The amount of education contributes to the type of job young Ugandans are able to get. This has led to a nearly continuous cycle of the children getting the same income as their parents (“Countries”). In these rural areas, education should be adjusted to teach the children about farming, as well (“Twesigye”). Many of the problems Ugandans have encountered are still occurring today, but programs are beginning to help and try to turn the situation around.

A program called the Water Aid Project has given them valuable education on the technologies needed to improve their water sanitation. Facilities for human waste are being built by the programs to help prevent diseases. They have also started using the “Rainwater Harvesting Tank.” The Rainwater Harvesting Tank is a technology that collects the rainwater as it is falling to use for everyday use. The rainwater is more

sanitary than the ground water. This technology can reduce the spreading of diseases by sixty-five percent, which would result in less deaths and less absences from school as there are less children becoming ill. It also saves the women and children from having to walk miles to collect water every day; the time saved could be spent as study time for the children, or in other productive ways. It would also give the women the benefit of not having to walk to get water as often. The “Rainwater Harvesting Tank” could help solve some education problems, too, as many problems cause a chain reaction (“Irby”).

Researchers are predicting that climate change could be a foreseeable problem in the future. Extreme weather conditions are becoming a problem for Uganda. Many regions will undergo a period of flash floods, which leads to destruction of their homes and crops. It also causes the diseases to spread as they are picked up by the flood waters. Uganda will also undergo periods of droughts. In these extreme weather conditions, respiratory problems in residents become more prevalent. The diseases caused by climate change lead to a decrease in the production of food, which leads to starvation and sometimes death. It also leads to the decrease of economic and social growth of Uganda (“Uganda Climate”).

Population growth is another prevalent problem in the coming decade in all countries, including Uganda. Every twenty years, the population is predicted to statistically double. This means less room for people, little to no land for crops, and less clean water and resources to go around. The diseases will spread much more quickly, and there will be many more deaths. As the population is growing, though, more deaths are expected, but the deaths should not be caused by diseases. The coming years will come with difficulties and problems that are not easily solved, but at Uganda’s current rate, the population will be healthier with more education and utilities to improve their quality of life (“Analysis”).

Uganda needs to improve their citizens’ economic status, particularly their farmers. By solving their water sanitation problems, they will also solve some economic problems, as well. If they use clean water for farming and to water their animals, more of the crops and animals will live and be disease-free when selling them. Selling more and trading more will lead to a bigger profit for the Ugandans. The Ugandans will be able to use more of the animal and plant seeds that they buy because less will be diseased and less will die. Once the Ugandans are educated concerning farming technologies, they will also have a higher yield of crops, which in turn would produce more income. All of the problems will take time to solve, but as one is solved, others are more easily solved (“Twesigye”).

Uganda needs to raise awareness regarding food-borne illnesses. Ugandan citizens need to be educated through public teachings. The government also needs to put strict controls on what foods can be sold by making and enforcing laws. Laws also need to be enforced regarding documentations on the illnesses when they occur. All of these should advocate for awareness about the human health, food borne illnesses, and the food sources causing the illnesses (“Building”).

The problems Ugandans face are raising awareness, which has encouraged improvement. Statistics show this, such as the percentage of people with access to latrines has improved from thirty in 2000, to thirty-four in 2010. The percentage of people with access to clean water has grown to seventy-two percent, whereas it was fifty-eight percent in 2000. The amount of land has grown from sixty-three percent in 2000 to seventy percent in 2009. The average life expectancy has increased from forty-six in 2000 to fifty-four in 2010. The percentage of completion of primary education was the same in 2010 as it was in

2000. Life is improving for the citizens of Uganda, but is still not where it should be (“Uganda Data”).

The Millennium Development Goals, or MDGs, set a high goal for Uganda to achieve by 2015. Goals one, seven, and eight are expected to be either partially or completely met by the year 2015. The first one, which states *to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger*, is important and currently a prevalent problem; experts predict that they can eradicate extreme poverty by the deadline. The seventh goal, stating *to ensure environmental sustainability*, needs to be met by having more wells and latrines. Finally, the eighth goal, stating *to develop a global partnership for development*, needs to be met first; it would help them achieve the other goal more quickly and efficiently (“Keane, Kennan, Cali, Massa, Willem te Velde, Ssewanyanna, Wokalda”).

The other MDGs, which either are not expected to be complete by 2015 or it needs improved progress in order to reach it. Experts are doubtful that Uganda can eradicate hunger, as stated in the first MDG. The second goal, stating *to achieve universal primary education*, once achieved, would help solve many other problems, but still needs improved progress for Uganda to meet it by 2015. The fourth goal, stating *to reduce child mortality rates*, and the fifth, stating *to improve maternal health*, are not expected to be met due to the sanitation of the hospitals (“Keane, Kennan, Cali, Massa, Willem te Velde, Ssewanyanna, Wokalda”).

To improve the lives of Ugandans, I suggest that they solve the eighth goal first, followed by the second, first, and seventh. All goals are important to be met, but many of the hardships in the average Ugandan life could be more easily solved if those four goals were succeeded. These goals cannot be solved without help, which is why the eighth goal, in my opinion is most urgent. Uganda needs help from local groups and worldwide organizations (“Keane, Kennan, Cali, Massa, Willem te Velde, Ssewanyanna, Wokalda”).

There are programs that are helping improve Uganda currently, such as Farm America. Farm America has a program, Maendeleo Agricultural Enterprise Fund, (MAEF), which helps farmers adopt new technologies and techniques, by connecting farmers with more affordable solutions. Their goal is to increase crop productivity. What the program does not do, though, is educate the Ugandans about how to use the technologies. Many Ugandans said that they didn’t know how to use the technologies, so this education would allow the program to be able to help more people. Farm America is helping many Ugandans with their work (“Uganda Farm”).

Water Aid is another program doing a lot of work with Uganda. This program works with the locals and local partnerships to improve the health of the Ugandans. Water Aid does this by improving the water quality and hygiene sanitation. They promote hand dug wells, spring water protection, rainwater harvesting tanks, and latrine facilities. All of these are fairly low cost and easily built and maintained. The communities are very involved and taught to manage the new technologies. To upscale their program, Water Aid could expand their efforts. Water Aid only works in fourteen of the one-hundred and eleven districts. Expanding to all of the districts will be expensive and will take hard work, but to efficiently help Ugandans, Water Aid need to help all of the ones in need (“Irby”).

To improve the food security in Uganda, changes need to be made. The foundation to change the problem would be to educate everyone, but especially the future generations. Ugandans need education concerning

how to keep their water clean and how to build water sanitation systems. This would allow for healthier food sources because almost all foods consist of water. The Ugandans would also need education concerning new technologies, such as equipment and advanced seeds, to improve their crop productivity. Ugandans will need to learn not only how to use the technologies, but how to obtain, manage, and repair them. The Ugandans need education concerning how to use their land to the fullest; they need to plant productive crops while planting a wide enough variety to achieve greater nutrition. Once Ugandans have the education, they will need some funds to provide these technologies the communities. These funds should be provided by worldwide programs, who should step up to help as well; the worldwide programs have the best resources to help Uganda in the in the most efficient manner and in a timely fashion. The United Nations Office for Partnerships should help set up a collaboration for Uganda. The World Bank should continue funding Uganda to make improvements to their sanitation and health problems, as well as their crop productivity issues. All over the world, organizations need to raise awareness, especially in younger generations. They should strive to get others involved in helping Uganda, as well as other needing countries. The Ugandan government needs to make strict laws concerning which water sources can be used, the expectations for hospitals, putting limits on their natural resources use, and ones concerning education needs. The Ugandan citizens need to first be willing to accept the help. The citizens also need to be cooperative and listen to the things they are taught; the citizens should try to apply their new knowledge to their everyday lives. They should be willing to accept and try the new changes applied to their lives and try to be flexible. Without the helping start of others, though, it will be impossible for Uganda to change. Half of the Millennium Development Goals are in question to be met. Though some trends are improving, there are many trends that are staying the same or even worsening. The lives of Ugandans need to change. Ugandans should no longer have to live in the nightmarish world that they live in today.

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