

Jessica Anderson
Algona High School
Algona, IA
Kenya, Factor 16: Education

Kenya: Education and its ties to poverty and food security

When the world seeks instant gratification for problems, it neglects to fully consider long term solutions. Nelson Mandela superseded that mental boundary by recognizing that “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.” This weapon also happens to be one of the most overlooked, especially in third world countries. Often in situations where people live in a poor community, the idea of becoming educated seems a ludicrous dream; generations of children have worked in the fields or have needed to assist parents in order to generate the necessary money for food. Motivation must be kindled for an education and later a job opportunity, the latter revealing the most pivotal problem concerning education: jobs. It is absolutely necessary to grasp that, although education will help the world’s economic poverty and current food production levels, it is worthless in an urban setting if there are no jobs for the people to work in. Involving rural education, there is little hope for new agricultural opportunities and increased yield unless further programs are integrated within schools for those in which that circumstance encourages. UNICEF statistics show that Kenya holds a literacy rate of 81% in females and 83% in males for people ages 15-24, an exceptional African advancement. Given this information, it is now imperative to ask why in the capital Nairobi alone there are roughly 1,155,000 people living in poverty. Additionally, Kenya has a notable economic chasm between its rich and poor people. In short, in order for Kenya to grow in food security, it must obtain a middle class- economically essential in both workforce and consumer aspects. To assist in growing the middle class, things to consider are what more education can entail to serve a more applicable purpose tailored for Kenya’s situation, and what societal issues hinder the academic success of the country. By discovering, defining, and creating solutions for each of these problems, the world will gain stable agriculture economies in locations such as Kenya. Given the advancements in medicine promoting longevity and generally the continuing increase in population, it is becoming more and more necessary to research ways to increase yield and find land to produce a healthy food supply. Many scientists believe that place may be Africa. However, in order to explore the possibilities of a fertile and economically productive Africa, specifically Kenya, education and jobs must prioritize to promote the necessary advancement.

Education plays a critical role in any economic situation. For instance, a farmer should understand the math applicable to his or her yield and the science for crop spacing, efficient seed buying, and herbicide or pesticide roles if applicable. A standard education through high school also would lead to opportunities in better understanding of business opportunities and the necessity of cultivating grassroots programs which further improve agricultural productivity. Considering a more urban setting, an education focusing on entrepreneurship, logistics, and general business could influence the growth of society by allowing markets to become increasingly accessible and successful. This holds promise in tying to the farmers by creating a partnership of production and export when currently one of the main focuses for African countries is the continuation of maintaining a growing export of agricultural goods. Although Kenya has excelled in that area through the past 10 years¹, the overall condition of the people in the country has not improved enough to recognize a substantial advancement of modern living through import/export, education, housing, and technology. Furthermore, it should be recognized that the growth of the country should be proportional in all of its different cultural situations. For example, the rural and urban economic growth and quality of living should increase at an equal rate if possible. Even though these people live very different lives, they are far from independent of each other. Correspondingly, each do have individual weaknesses which affect each other. These weaknesses must be overcome in order to begin and maintain a stable increase of growth. Many problems can be fixed by cooperation between farmers and the government or urban population in order to maintain healthy inter-country trade as well as

international exportation. However, in order to begin a successful climb out of poverty and into food and economic security, Kenya's weakness, its lack of a middle class, must be overcome.

It is impossible to distinguish a single average family within the complex and varied income situation within Kenya. However, if one focuses on the two most common living styles, a more understandable and in depth analysis of the current society can be acquired. Beginning with the largest and most pressing barrier toward improvement, the lack of a middle class workforce retains the majority of people living in cities from obtaining a sustainable living situation. The capital of Kenya, Nairobi, contains roughly 3.5 million people; over 33% of Nairobi's population lives in the slums, the majority of which reside in the area known as Kibera, in which a home usually consists of one small 10x10 room. That means that over 1 million people are living in conditions with no immediate running water, no electricity, and no sanitation.⁴ They "make do" and many are not starving, but the fact remains that the quality of living is unimaginably behind the standard of today's society. Even though places like Kibera contain thriving marketplaces run by people in the slums and most, although on a tight budget, can afford to eat, this is not a stable or productive way of living. The only way to advance in this society remains to become educated then obtain, or create, a job. Creating jobs is especially important because it also creates new markets. Furthermore, the government and the people both must agree on cooperation regarding job ideas, loans to create businesses, and the overall emphasis on agricultural trade and exportation. Although that would not appear to be much, the profound impact it would begin acts as an essential part of a growing country. Admittedly, there cannot be expectations for immediate success, but the process must start quickly in order for results to be seen in the soonest possible time. Yet, the opportunity education poses cannot produce a full effect until it is incorporated in all lifestyles across the country; that includes the 75% of population living in rural areas.

With 75%, or 34 million, of Kenya's populace living in rural areas, a wealth of opportunity lies within educating these farming people.² Currently, the lives of these men and women rely on their crops and livestock. The aridity and erosion make growing crops a difficult task; however, statistics collected by The United Nations Programme and released in their article "Food Production and Consumption Trends in Sub-Saharan Africa" (2012) show a credible increase in food exports to other countries in the past 10 years. Most farmers though, use subsistence farming practices to provide for themselves and trade for all other necessities or items that they wish to obtain. With very little money, and few opportunities to spend it, their lives revolve around their work. On the other hand, for those able to access it, the Free Primary Education Act has increased Kenya's educated populace leading to an increase in industrial and agricultural production rates. Yet, that poses the question, "What may be done to make it further accessible?"

Quite simply, Kenya faces the infrastructure problems that all other growing countries have faced. Government involvement could create jobs for the people by teaching and then hiring workers to pave and create new roads for inter-country trade, tourism, and to allow more connections between rural and urban areas. These options further benefit Kenya's in many ways: less people on the streets, encouragement towards relations both in country and internationally by expressing willingness and capability to advance, and also by providing a base for the job market while education is being strongly rooted and made consistent within the country. It is notable to say that education includes both formal and informal integrations because both hold crucial roles in child development and agricultural programs. Examples of such agricultural programs include America's 4H and FFA (Future Farmers of America) which teach valuable life skills for home management, engineering, and viewing the business and scientific state of agriculture.

Kenya holds a steadily increasing position to become an independently successful country; however, to further improve their stance in the world, children must see the necessity of a formal education, and not only formal, but informal as well. By encouraging parents to take part in teaching their children the ways of using the land most effectively, and by if possible sharing knowledge related to arithmetic and writing,

a boundary has been hurdled. Taking into consideration how much there is to learn, any help would be provide an advantage for the children entering the school system. When involving the agricultural sector, this informal learning may provide crucial knowledge for increased yield, which, when incorporated into a grassroots program of integrating and sharing farm based strategies and techniques, would be quintessential to food production. First, in order to further comprehension of the problem at hand, scientists, sociologists, and even politicians need to examine the school system and what benefits, and flaws, it contains.

According to the Foundation for Sustainable Development, 1.7 million children are not receiving an education in Kenya's 8-4-4 school system. This means that the standard is 8 years of primary school, 4 years of secondary school, and 4 years of tertiary education; in America that would be elementary/middle school, high school, and college. Although Kenya has made a gradual steady improvement over the years, with a large jump after the Free Primary Education policy³, a standard cooperative education system has not been fully developed. The children deprived of the even the 8 years of primary school are most often living in the cities slums. Their parents, if present, do not have enough money for food let alone to allow the child the luxury of school. Because of this, integrating school lunches into the programs would be highly effective motivation. Yet since some schools do not do this, and other obstacles arise, children still face many problems when attempting to complete an education. These problems include: getting to the school, having enough food to eat, continuing to have clothes on their back, and place to sleep at night. These deterrents hinder the motivation of the children to achieve an education just as effectively as a hard class does for a failing student in a first world country. By not prioritizing education for children, this not only increases the poverty level, but decreases the availability of the workforce for business owners and the upper class. Therefore, basic needs must be met or motivation given. Additionally, by completing this education there shows promise for the benefits it could pose on a modern, scientific level.

The most severe problem affecting an increased production of food sources in Kenya is weather; yet, how can weather be overcome? Technology is the modern key to tackling problems previously thought impossible. Especially in America, bioengineering is an essential part of agriculture. As one of the biggest producers in both meat and crops, America has become the role model of overcoming weather adversity through the use of science. Applicable to all countries, the furthering of government research in bioengineering already plays a large role in crop production and nutritional advancement all around the world. By continuing this research and making it accessible to farmers, both researchers and the agriculture sector benefit from the arrangement. Internationally, crops are being genetically enhanced to meet the needs of the people in the country. As a growing nation, Kenya should take advantage of such opportunities. By researching genetic changes, crop seeds are genetically altered to to be properly equipped for the climate situation where they are to be planted and to provide the right vitamins in order to help a population struggling to find that particular item in their current food source. This critical development would ease the burden of problems such as erosion and drought and increase the crop production, allowing for a larger export- therefore, a greater income. Subsequently, an education providing further schooling in mathematics and science would benefit the farmers as they learn to compete with a growing market in order to achieve efficiency.⁵

Opening the doorways at a young age to know mathematics, science, and writing would all help increase the efficiency of agriculture, and through that, start a domino effect that would assist the condition of the entire country. Considering the influence that bioengineering and mathematics have had on the current state of food production in the world, further advancing this to help small farms would completely change the lives of millions of people. Kenya is known for its challenging weather conditions, so as bioengineering is used in the United States to protect crop from adversity, similarly could Kenya prioritize this in order to advance a stable export of food production. Underestimating the influence of small farms is a mistake many countries make. Although it requires funding, once these farms are supported and begin to produce profit, the government has gained a steady form of income through the

taxes they will collect. Those small farms would grow to provide for larger markets and the tons of the agricultural export would rise; naturally, the government as well as the farmers would again reap the benefit. By the government taking the initiative for funding farmers, the effects would extend to more than just their small rural communities, the profit of having a marketable and affordable agriculture trade extends into the cities as well.

The solution to easing the pain of hunger and poverty in third world countries, especially Kenya, lies within education and job creation to provide food security. Given that specific education involving math, science, English, and the vital grassroots programs are integrated and prove effective, the surplus food would be sold to other people in the community and later in the cities. Selling at an affordable price to people instead of companies would decrease the risk of monopolistic oppression and help the growth of middle class which the Kenyan society lacks. Although exporting goods is essential to profitable economic success, it is crucial to view trade inside the country as a necessity as well. This would be done in order to assist in further development. The process is best understood when viewed with its relations to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. The flow of rural crop production to city food markets creates a stable Kenyan economy which relies on itself, not outside sources for its food. Then, once basic security needs are met within the majority of the society, improvements based in education and self actualization become priority. Realistically, in today's world, by educating the people, only then, can the first base (physiological needs) be overcome. Ideally, education leads to motivation for the creation of jobs which provide money to be used to accommodate the needs. Most jobs are a most often a product of luxuries, although naturally some arise from necessities as well. As the increase of income becomes steady, the natural impulse appears to buy things appears- to gather. This therefore explains how education keyed with job creation would progress the country. Additionally, schooling involving agriculture and economics play a distinct role too. Hence why benefits would be reaped in the crop production/marketing field to advance food supplies in Kenyan cities at an affordable price. So, by educating the farmers, the problem of poverty in with both the poor in the cities and the farmers in the rural areas has been eased if not erased.

Many countries could act using this same logic because the widespread blight of poverty has a universal keynote based upon inability of advancement. When people grow, they grow together. Therefore, the helping of the lower class in both lifestyles will help each other and the upper class. By encouraging the United Nations as a whole to formally recognize the importance of affordable education and how it helps decrease poverty, the leaders of each country can then begin to integrate their own individualized programs. Increased funding to create schools, buying supplies, and paying for teachers would all help improve the situation as well as efforts to improve living conditions. To address the direct problem of education, however, both monetary and worker contributions to organizations such as the FSD (Foundation for Sustainable Development)³ could also prove extremely beneficial. Also, almost always a local project in Kenya is centered around volunteering teachers, doctors, and nurses. This is extremely helpful because of it's lack of cost; however, certified teachers and hospital staff, which should be paid, would help with security in the various fields and provide jobs. Encouragement of ordinary citizens to pressure the government into these new reforms would revolutionize the education system. The advantages of having the people take the initiative are endless, additionally, there are also disadvantages as well. What the government saves in money, it also lacks in sustainability. After all, if the majority of the people are only volunteers there is no foundation for the future. By having paid workers, in the education fields especially, a strong base may be formed to grow. This could be a job of the national government, and collectively, each city to have a teacher within certain populated areas and even in the country. Formal education is the recognized way of success, informal, no matter how thorough, does not carry the same weight when trying to obtain a job. As was previously stated, the proliferation of economic advancement in Kenya's exports of agricultural goods is inextricably intertwined with the education involved in the country.

It is important to recognize that poverty is a situation humanity can change. Through enforcement of gender equality in education and jobs by societal and governmental emphasis, education will become an essential right for all, solidifying it as the strong backbone for the advancing country. Prioritizing knowledge in mathematics, science, reading and writing at a young age all decrease the chances of poverty later in life. Additionally, as the amount of educated people grow in an advancing country, the more job opportunities must occur as well to compensate for society to expand in obtaining the luxuries of a first world country. The increase the efficiency of agriculture, and through that, bettering of the country would also result from a formal schooling including agricultural classes. Increased funding to buy supplies, pay for teachers, and provide internships for graduating and current students would all help improve the educational situation as well as efforts to improve urban living conditions. Although Kenya is an agriculture based export country, cities often suffer worse than rural areas due to the lack of jobs and area to produce a form of subsistence crop. By supporting organizations such as the Foundation for Sustainable Development, Kenya can prosper and control its urbanization. The necessity of government of involvement for bioengineering funding and job creation is crucial. In conclusion, the advancements of technology and agricultural education in today's world are an opportunity to be taken advantage of especially when considering food production. The connection between all of the world's exports is profound and the relationship of the various products in a country is even more influential to the state of society.

Works Cited

- ¹ Chauvin, Nicolas D., Francis Mulangu, and Guido Porto. *Food Production and Consumption Trends in Sub-Saharan Africa: Prospects for the Transformation of the Agricultural Sector*. *News.heartland.org*. United Nations Development Programme, Feb. 2012. Web. 26 Mar. 2015.
- ² "Encyclopedia of the Nations." *Kenya Agriculture, Information about Agriculture in Kenya*. Advameg, Inc., 2015. Web. 26 Mar. 2015.
- ³ Foundation for Sustainable Development. "Youth and Education Opportunities in Kenya." *Youth and Education Opportunities in Kenya*. Foundation for Sustainable Development, 2015. Web. 26 Mar. 2015.
- ⁴ Higgins, Abby. "Life in Kenya Slum Sheds Light on Growing Global Reality - The Seattle Globalist." *The Seattle Globalist ICal*. The Seattle Globalist, 2015. Web. 27 Mar. 2015.
- ⁵ Kenya Agricultural Research Institute. "Food Security Report." *Food Security Portal*. (Prepared by Kenya Agricultural Research Institute | Food Security Portal, 2012. Web. 26 Mar. 2015.
- ⁶ UNICEF Staff. "Kenyan Statistics." *UNICEF*. UNICEF, 27 Dec. 2013. Web. 26 July 2015.