

Sammi Tolnai
Nashua - Plainfield High School
Nashua, IA
Rwanda, Conflict

Rwanda: Tribal Lines and Fruitless Vines, How Genocide Left A Nation of Hungry People

Background

At the end of World War I, in 1916, Belgium was granted control of Rwanda after the League of Nations mandated the control of the small farm country to the Belgium powerhouse. Thus, when Belgium took control, the current power structure had remained, and the wedge between the Hutus' and the Tutsis' remained and grew as time went on. As the Tutsis' stayed in power, their ethnic discrimination was there to stay as well. One year prior to the disbandment of the League of Nations, established after World War I, Belgium, with the help of the United Nations, continued to govern Rwanda until their plea of independence. After the United Nations was formed after World War II, Rwanda became a trust nation and Belgium continued to govern Rwanda, while still giving them power in their own country. When the Rwandan king died in 1959, Rwanda held their first, free public election. This election resulted in a Hutu leader for the first time, thus changing the dynamic of the country and the laws in place against the Hutus. In the late 1950s to the early 1960s, the idea of independence was sweeping Africa by storm. Many countries surrounding Rwanda were beginning to protest their independence and Hutu resentment of the Tutsis increased, leading to a wedge driven deeper and deeper between the two groups, eventually leading to the Rwandan Genocide of 1994.

From the late 1980s to the early 1990s, Rwanda was involved in a civil war between the Hutu-led government and rebel Tutsis. When this war broke out, many Rwandans fled for sanctuary in Zaire, now the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This led to the signing of the Arusha Peace Accords, which is believed to have put the civil war to an end; however, that was not the end because many Rwandans were still scared and worried for their lives. During this time, 987 cartons of machetes were imported into Rwanda. These had played an important role in the genocide due to them being the preferred murder weapon of Hutus. The civil war had left Rwanda: impoverished, hungry, desperate, and willing to do anything to avoid the famine they were thrown into. When the United Nations attempted to intervene by bringing food and aide, the supplies began being used as a weapon to encourage others to join the cause of the rebel Tutsis'. On April 6, 1994, the Rwandan and Burundi presidents, Juvénal Habyarimana, and Cyprien Ntaryamira, were traveling back from Tanzania when their plane was shot down. They had been traveling there for negotiations and had both been killed when the plane crashed. The Hutu led government had blamed the Tutsis for the death of President Habyarimana, resulting in the mass killing of Tutsis. While the genocide only lasted four months, it had displaced over one and half million Rwandans, and the death toll was over one million.

Geography

Rwanda is a landlocked country with the Democratic Republic of the Congo sharing its western border, Burundi at its southern border, Uganda at its northern border, and it shares an eastern border with Tanzania. In comparison to states' sizes, Rwanda is slightly smaller than Maryland. In terms of area, Rwanda has a total of 26,338 square kilometers; however, only 1,670 square kilometers are devoted to water, leaving 24,668 square kilometers for land. Compared to the rest of the world, Rwanda ranks 149th in terms of area. The terrain in Rwanda consists of mostly grassy uplands and hills and relief points in the terrain are mountainous, stretching from west to east. The climate in Rwanda, much like most of Africa, is an agreeable temperature, usually about 70° Fahrenheit or 21° Celsius, and has two rainy seasons from February to April and November to January. Rwanda has quite a few mountainous areas and in those particular areas, the temperature is milder, about 55° Fahrenheit and 12.8° Celsius, than it is throughout the rest of the country. In terms of Rwanda's land use, 74.5 percent is used as agricultural land, 18 percent is forest, and the last 7.5 percent is listed as other. The agricultural land is divided up as arable land, permanent crops, and permanent pastures. The arable land is 47 percent, permanent crops are 10.1 percent and permanent pastures takes up 17.4 percent of the land. Of the 74.5 percent of agricultural land, 96 square kilometers need to be irrigated in order to sustain crops. On the scale of population distribution throughout the country, Rwanda is one of Africa's most densely populated countries. The most densely populated areas are along the shore of Lake Kivu. Rwanda experiences periodic droughts and along their border with Congo, lies the volcanic Virunga Mountains; while the Nivskoe, also on the Congo border, is Rwanda's only historically active volcano. Currently, Rwanda is experiencing environmental issues that have impacted the production of food throughout the country. For instance, overgrazing of livestock has led to the damaging of their grasslands, deforestation results in uncontrolled cutting of trees for fuel, and one of the biggest when it comes to their lack of food sources and hunger is soil erosion and soil fertility. The hunger problems in Rwanda can be attributed to the soil issues faced by farmers in everyday life. Soil issues are causes of hunger throughout the country because the soil is eroding and the plants are disappearing. Thus not only are they losing plants, they are losing the money they spent on their crops.

Society and Culture

Current records place Rwanda's population at 12,187,400 people. The official and most used language in Rwanda is Kinyarwanda, but French, English, and Swahili are also commonly used. Demographically, Rwanda has seen an abrupt decline in fertility in the declining birth rate due to the countries increased reproductive rights and education. While the birth rate is still high, it has declined due to young women's access to sexual education. This has helped them better understand family planning before they enter the reproductive age. By doing so, young girls are able to better their education and give them a better life. The mean age of a woman's first birth is 25 to 29 giving women more of a chance to excel in a career before having children. Considering Rwanda is quite densely populated, one of the most densely populated in Africa, it is no surprise that there is a strain to families when it comes to the ability to produce food and their access to clean and potable water. The Rwandan government has done its best to reduce poverty and the degradation of natural and environmental resources, vital for everyday living. The strain can also be credited to smaller agricultural landholdings per families. In terms of health in Rwanda, the risk of contracting a major infectious disease is very high and some of the most common diseases are: bacterial diarrhea, hepatitis A, typhoid fever, malaria, dengue fever, rabies, and HIV/AIDS. Of the twelve

million people in Rwanda, 220,000 are living with HIV/AIDS and every year 3,100 people die of HIV/AIDS.

Education throughout Rwanda has been given multiple beneficial financial opportunities for improvement and has benefited because of it. In recent years, Rwanda has received grants to further their education and benefit their large, growing population. Throughout these recent years, Rwanda has received over \$200,660,000 dollars that have been allocated or promised, towards helping the educational efforts in Rwanda. Of the approximately \$200,660,000 dollars promised for education in Rwanda, they had received \$200,200,000 dollars which has allowed the education to thrive and benefit all of those in Rwanda. Throughout Rwanda, a person who is literate is defined as being at least fifteen years old and having the ability to read and write. Currently, the Global Partnership for Education has come up with an Education Plan and has improved the education by introducing new components and providing financial help as well. Recently, girls have been given more of an opportunity to learn and the percentage has grown based on completion of primary school (Education in Rwanda). In Rwanda, both men and women have a school-life expectancy of 11 years.

Possible Solutions

One possible solution to reduce, and someday end, hunger is by introducing programs into their thriving school systems and giving them the tools to produce their own food and save themselves money. Soil erosion in Rwanda has occurred due to a lack of knowledge on how to properly care for a field and get the best yield from each crop production. Considering that most Rwandans go to school for about 11 years, introducing more agricultural based curriculum will give students the ability to learn how to produce their own sustainable farms and care for livestock. While teaching them how to care for livestock and crops is an important vital part of ending hunger, teaching them how to care for their fields and soil is more important so they know how to make their fields last longer and help stop the soil erosion from persisting. One way schools can make sure their education is working is by building gardens and having the students work on it and take the skills they learned in school home to their families. Teaching children earlier on how to care for, not just livestock and crops, but their land as well, would give the land a chance to benefit and thrive making it more eco-efficient and protect their degrading environment. By intervening earlier, Rwandans can hopefully reverse the effects of degradation and improve the environment. However, some problems that may arise are not getting the education they are being taught by agriculture teachers. This problem could be ratified by creating a program, much like doctors without borders, for agriculture teachers to share their knowledge and make a difference in their lives. Teachers have the power to change the world and allowing them to travel to an underprivileged country gives them an even more impactful way to help the world.

Currently in Rwanda, there is not, specifically listed, an agriculture or environmental curriculum present in the primary school years for students. However, once they graduate from secondary school and enter university, if they choose, they may enter an environmental and agricultural education career path. Nevertheless, as stated earlier, the school programming should have a more rigorous and involving program for agriculture and environment in the small farming country of Rwanda. Without having agricultural and environmental classes as a key and crucial program, the students are lacking the knowledge needed to care for their environment. While introducing this program idea would help the

youth of Rwanda, that leaves the current adults unsure of how to care for their fields. For instance Rwanda could implement a 4-H program like Ghana has done recently. By making it a school club, kids would be able to participate during school hours and it would not take time from their work at home. If Rwanda were to begin a 4-H program, Rwanda would be able to join the Africa 4-H Network. By joining the network they would have the ability to communicate and share ideas for improvement. By adapting Ghana's model for 4-H in the school system, they could dramatically improve the agriculture program and education in Rwanda. The importance of educating children in Rwanda is critical; however, they are far from caring for a farm full time, if at all. There needs to be a program for adults in Rwanda to learn how to care for their fields now.

A program to train adults in Rwanda would greatly increase the agricultural knowledge of Rwandans. Much like Ethiopia, Rwanda would benefit greatly by starting a program to educate Rwandan adults. By instituting a program like this, Rwandan adults would have the ability to care for their crops and get a first hand, hands on experience to learn from successful farmers. A case study about the education programs in Ethiopia revealed, "Educational programs were needed for both men and women. Extension services were needed for postharvest loss minimization and storage and these services did not reach farmers at the grassroots." (Kagima, 2005). Thus, it is important to introduce a program for adults to care for their farmland and animals in Rwanda as well. Implementing these programs would help to ensure that all Rwandans get the necessary agriculture background to maintain their farms and crops.

Another possible, however problematic, solution is to limit the number of children each family could have. This would limit the rate of the growing population; however, much like China, lots of baby girls would likely find themselves in orphanages and adoption. Thus, this creates a bigger problem than proposed. While limiting the number of kids will limit the number of people that need to be fed, most people would only want boys, to carry on their family name, leaving baby girls in orphanages and adoptions; and, leaves more babies. However, China, at this time, does not have an evolved system like Rwanda has when it comes to unwanted babies. Another problem with this possible solution is Rwandans view their children as a sign of wealth. This might cause a downfall in the idea and lead to them not wanting to limit their social status of wealth.

Conclusion

To conclude, due to Rwanda's insufficient agricultural and environmental programs in schools and lack of adult knowledge, education programs for agriculture and environmental studies are critical for Rwanda's future. By introducing these types of programs, the farm and agricultural life in Rwanda will have the ability to prosper. Thus resulting in a more successful field production and better use of the land they have. A 4-H program would also benefit the small farming country by instilling the qualities and the curiosity for kids to love agriculture and farming.

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