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Chad, Gender Inequality

### **Chad: A Country Divided by Gender**

Sixty-seven percent. That's the percentage of girls in Chad who will be married before they are 18 ("Chad," Girls Not Brides). Child marriage is of a high prevalence due to the idea that men are better than women. This makes women highly discriminated against and, therefore, have significantly fewer opportunities compared to men. There is a gender crisis happening in Chad that needs to be solved to help their malnutrition issue.

Chad is a landlocked country in the northern-central part of Africa that is bordered by Libya, Sudan, Central African Republic, Nigeria, and Niger. It is a shallow basin that slowly rises from Lake Chad in the West and is surrounded by mountains in the North, South, and East ("Chad", Britannica). Chad's population is 17,963,211 (Means). Chadians are divided into more than 200 ethnic groups with over 120 languages and dialects spoken (Means). Polygamous couples are not out of the ordinary ("Chad," CultureGrams). This is a big contrast compared to the rest of the world, as polygamy is outlawed in many countries. Men in Chad can have as many wives and children as they wish ("Chad," CultureGrams). Family is very important to Chadians and families are supposed to provide for one another and help each other in times of need. Families often live together or near each other.

Housing depends on where the person lives and how much money they have. The main type of houses in Chad are made of brick walls stuck to the ground with mortar and cement as the foundation ("Housing Finance"). Wealthy houses normally have several bedrooms, two bathrooms, a living room, a kitchen, and a terrace ("Chad," CultureGrams). Even still, houses in wealthier areas are not comparable to houses in America. Rural housing looks like simple shacks that are far from what houses are in the U.S. Rural families live in huts with one room; the inside walls are covered with mud ("Chad," CultureGrams). These families typically live in one-room shacks that often are not very sanitary. Such rural families have a low living standard which negatively affects public health. Nomadic people live in temporary, moveable shelters ("Chad," CultureGrams). In rural areas, only 37.57% of the population have access to water and only 12.06% have access to sanitation ("Housing Finance"). Water is collected from wells or bought from vendors; while generators or oil lamps are used for power and light ("Chad", CultureGrams). It can be difficult for people in Chad to live comfortable lives due to the lack of resources.

Farming in Chad is different from farming in the U.S. In Chad, 39.9% of land is cultivated ("Chad: Agricultural Land"). The country's main exports are gum arabic, sesame seeds, and cotton ("Chad - Country Commercial Guide"). Many people in Chad rely on agriculture. Chad has a wide range in latitudes which means they have a large climatic range ("Chad", Britannica). The climate varies from wet and dry tropical to hot arid with the north being drier and having more infrequent rain ("Chad", Britannica). The lowest amount of rain that the north gets is less than one inch ("Chad", Britannica). Chad has a short rainy season and a dry season. Forty-three percent of people have access to drinking water and 10% of people have access to sanitation ("Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene"). Less than one in two children

has access to clean drinking water and only one in ten has access to sanitation (“Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene”). This leads to the ongoing issue of malnutrition and the high prevalence of diseases.

Of the children who are of age for school, less than half of them take this opportunity (Grove). This is a big contrast to a lot of other countries where school is mandatory. Only 20% of students who finish elementary school have a good basis in reading and math in the two classroom languages, French and Arabic. The illiteracy rate for youth is around 70% and for girls 15-24 years old it is more than 77%. This also contributes to gender inequality because of the lack of education for women. There is little access to higher education and training in Chad (“Education”). This contributes to the issue of lack of healthcare. There is limited access to healthcare in Chad which is another factor in the high amount of malnutrition and disease. Clinics in Chad usually do not have needed medicines or enough staff (“Education”). There is a national free care policy for malnourished children, but there are often hidden costs that make it hard for people to afford care (“Chad | Summary”). There is also a religious barrier that makes it harder for people to get the care that they need. Many mothers will prefer to take their children to a religious leader rather than a doctor or medical professional (“Chad | Summary”). This also contributes to a lower quality of life because of a high prevalence of untreated disease.

Recognized officially as a presidential republic, Chad has a president and prime minister (“Chad”, CultureGrams). This government system is seen a lot throughout Africa. The president is the head of the state along with the prime minister (“Chad,” CultureGrams). The president is elected for a five-year term by a popular vote of the citizens and then goes on to appoint the prime minister (“Chad: Government”). In the judicial branch, the president appoints the chief justice and people in the judicial branch serve for life (“Chad: Government”). This is similar to the United States government. Then, with help from the national assembly, the president appoints fifteen councilors (“Chad: Government”). The legislative branch is controlled by the national assembly (“Chad: Government”). The national assembly is similar to the parliament in the English government. Chad is divided into twenty-three different regions. The villages are countries and are led by chiefs. The political parties are normally formed based on religion and ethnicity (“Chad”, CultureGrams). Overall, Chad’s government is similar to both the governments of the United States and England.

Gender inequality in Chad is an ongoing issue. The forms of violence with the highest prevalence are child marriages, physical and sexual violence from relatives, polygamy, and denial of resources for women (“Violence Against Women”). Even so, Chad has a good framework for equality, and they have made some progress towards women's rights even in a fragile environment (“Chad: UN Experts”). Chad has banned female genital mutilation and child marriage, but the law is not being enforced and these crimes are still happening behind closed doors (“Chad: UN Experts”). This is a reason that women are oppressed even though there are laws banning it, it is still happening without punishment. This can make women feel powerless because not even laws can stop men from doing these things. Some reasons it is such a prevalent issue are that most women do not inherit land, making their economic power and freedom more restricted (“Chad: UN Experts”). Girls in Chad do not get an equal education because of child marriage (Kipfer). Many girls are forced to drop out of school and start a family. They have to leave their families and communities to live with their husbands (Kipfer). This takes away a support system of friends and family. Girls have to move to areas that they are not from and start over unsupported. They also are forced to drop their studies and give up on any hopes of having a job that is outside of taking care

of the home. Sexual violence is common as well (“Chad: UN Experts”). Women are often pressured and shamed to not speak out against the acts committed against them to defend their family's honor. The justice system in Chad heavily favors men and often sides with them in court cases (“Chad: UN Experts”). This can cause women to feel discouraged to speak out about violence committed against them, especially if they have taken issues to court before and been silenced.

Women who live in rural parts of the country suffer more from gender inequality than women who are in urban areas. Most women do not inherit land, making their economic power limited (“Chad: UN Experts”). Also, even if they were to inherit land, many would not know what to do with it due to limited access to education and resources. Older women in Chad also suffer more from gender inequality. Older women whose husbands have died or left them may be forced to marry their brother-in-law because of the absence of a husband or because their sister died (“SGBV STRATEGY”). This leads to gender inequality because it can make men feel more powerful. Lack of education for women also affects the environment. People who understand how climate change affects the earth are more likely to want to do something about it.

A solution to this issue is to apply an education program in Chad that has proven successful in Rwanda. In this program, women are taught essential skills for farming such as public speaking, good governance, farming skills, and contract negotiation skills so they are able to start their own farms (Sesonga). The classes would be in the evenings so women could still do their chores around the house during the day. They could take place in schools that children use so that new buildings wouldn't have to be built. There have been improvements seen in nutrition and an increase in profit in Rwanda after women went through the program (Sesonga). This means it most likely would meet the needs of all the population. If women in rural areas are taught good farming skills, they could produce food to sell to urban communities increasing the amount of nutrition received. Also, women in rural areas could teach women in urban areas farming skills and they could start small gardens to further increase the amount of nutrition that they consume or have access to. Rooftop gardens would also make nutritious food more accessible being near homes in population-dense areas. This solution would also boost economic activity due to farming supplies being purchased by more people and crops/animal products being sold and bought. This solution is sustainable because the skills learned can be passed down to future generations. The knowledge learned will not run out as money and other resources will.

Even though it has proven successful in Rwanda, there are factors in Chad that need to be considered while creating the program. Part of the reason that women are discriminated against is because of cultural factors. One of them is women being married early (“Chad”, CultureGrams). After they are married, Chadian women are expected to take care of the house and children. Women who are married are not able to go to school, so if a woman is married early, she will not be able to finish her education. This has to be taken into consideration because if a woman is married and has to take care of the house, then she would not be able to take classes for farming. Her husband may also not want her to take classes because he would not want her to become knowledgeable. Notably, if some women do learn, it could encourage more women to take classes. Also, it may start to become more normalized if a lot of women take these classes, resulting in future generations being able to take them more easily.

Students at an American college can apply for a program to teach farming in Ghana (Flammini). A similar program could be implemented, but students would teach farming in Chad. The students will be in Ghana for around ten months teaching alongside agriculture teachers in the community to help introduce more people to farming (Flammini). This could help teach western farming practices while still preserving traditional practices. It can also help develop new ideas for the best farming practice. Students will be trained in the U.S. before leaving and can share their experiences after returning home (Flammini). It will also be a good experience for the students to get to go to another country and teach farming, especially if they want to go into the education field, benefiting both communities. It would also be a good opportunity for students to become more culturally aware.

World Food Programme, FAO, IFAD, and UN Women are running the education program in Rwanda (Sesonga). They could also run the program in Chad. They have worked with oppressed women in Rwanda so they will know the things that would make the program in Chad most successful. The World Food Programme can be the head of the project, but other groups like FAO and UN Women can help with specific areas of the project. UN Women can help empower the women and remind them of their rights. They can also help women get justice for the violence committed against them by men. FAO can help teach the women farming skills/help train the students to teach women. The FAO could also provide supplies to get them started. A grant could help kick start this project. This could be used to hire the students to teach and pay for their travels. It could also pay for simple supplies that can help them get started farming after they have learned the skills. Also, after a program gets a grant, they are more likely to receive more grants (“Pros and Cons: Grants”). This could help further improve the education of future generations by teaching them newer, better farming techniques.

This solution has many benefits. One of them is that it would help feed a starving and malnourished country. With around double the amount of people farming, food production would skyrocket. Also, new farming practices could be created to help solve other problems. Another benefit would be an economic activity increase. With more people farming, there would be extra food. That food could be sold to others that cannot farm or produce their own food. It could also be exported out of the country to other places to make more money for the country. This would help bring the country out of poverty and increase the living standard. With women being able to sell the food they produce, they can make money. This can then be used to pay for essential things like healthcare or education. Women who have a better education are able to make better and more informed choices (“The Importance”). Women who are educated build stronger families, communities, and economies (“The Importance”). By educating women in Chad, it will improve society as a whole. Countries with educated women see a higher level of productivity (“The Importance”). Chad could be a better functioning country with educated women.

To see these benefits, better quality skills need to be taught. Some essential farming skills are organizational skills, farm operating systems, animal and crop management skills, technical and mechanical skills, communication skills, practical farming skills, quick learning, and marketing skills (“9 Important Farming Skills”). These skills can be taught in the classes to make women the best farmers that they can be. Organizational skills can help them be able to keep their farm neat and orderly. Farm operating skills can help them know how to do certain activities on their farm and how they will carry them out. They must know animal and crop management skills to properly take care of the crops and animals. They must also know technical and mechanical skills to make sure they do not get hurt or

damage anything. In farming, it is crucial to be a fast learner because it is always changing. Finally, if someone is trying to make a profit, they must know how to market their products so consumers will want to buy them. These can all be taught in the classes to make successful farmers.

Educating women on farming can help solve the gender crisis happening in Chad and markedly help decrease the nation's malnutrition issue. Women can become more involved in the economy by selling the food that they grow and become more empowered. Education can take the 67% of girls married before age 18 to 0%; then they will start to be seen as equal to men.

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