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Zimbabwe, Poverty

The solution to poverty in Zimbabwe is bananas

Zimbabwe is a landlocked country with a moderate climate, with an average temperature of 45 °F at night in the winter and during the summer an average day temperature of 75 °F. There is a population of 15 million as of 2023 (Zimbabwe Population 2021 - Worldometer, 2022), with the rural population making up about 67.7% and the urban about 32.3% of it (Zimbabwe - Rural Population - 1960-2019 Data | 2021 Forecast, 2021). As of 2020 41.88% (Zimbabwe - Agricultural Sectors, 2022) of Zimbabwe's land is cultivated with the average farm size being 50 hectares (ZIMBABWE SMALLHOLDER AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIVITY SURVEY 2017 REPORT, 2019), which is about 123.5 football fields. The biggest crops are maize, soybeans, cotton, and tobacco. Of which tobacco is the biggest export. It is a full presidential republic. The president is elected by the public, and is the head of the state and the executive branch. Zimbabwe is divided into 8 provinces (Pariona, 2019). A presidentially-appointed Governor manages each province with the aid of provincial administrators and ministries. In legislation, there are 120 seats that are elected by the public, 12 presidential appointed seats, 8 provincial governors, the Speaker, the Attorney General, as well as ten tribes that are represented by their chiefs (Pariona, 2019).

A majority of Zimbabweans own their own house (Herald, 2022), there are typically four people per household with 83 percent of the dwellings being modern (Ziana, 2022). Their diets consist of maize, sorghum, millet, wheat, and rice. A common occupation is teaching English the average salary of a Zimbabwean is ZW\$20000, about \$62.11 in American money. Schools closing due to a lack of funding has significantly impacted rural areas with only about a quarter of children being able to continue to be in school after the pandemic, compared to 70 percent in urban areas before COVID-19. Overall 47% of kids are not in school due to poverty since it costs about \$100 per year to send a child to elementary and \$300 to go to secondary. As of 2022, 73% of Zimbabweans have clean water, 60% have access to improved sanitation facilities, in rural areas 44% still use open defecation facilities as of 2021 (Lampard-Scotford et al., 2022). 89.6% of the total population have access to a mobile phone (Muhamba, 2021) which could be a great opportunity for future development. In rural areas, health facilities are often underfunded with fewer doctors and nurses compared to urban facilities just like so many other places in the world. There are very few job opportunities in Zimbabwe, so much so that in the past decade an estimated 3.4 million Zimbabweans have left the country, which is about a quarter of the population (Idemudia et al., 2013).

Zimbabwe is the 22 poorest country in the world (Booth, 2018) which is a major issue. It has been an ongoing issue since Zimbabwe became independent from the United Kingdom in 1980, with its main income from agriculture and mining. This caused the downfall of the country since there has been bad rainfall in 2018-2019 accompanied by cyclone Idai which lasted from March 4-March 21 killing more than 1,500 people, 172 of them being Zimbabweans and caused at least 327 people to be reported missing. This also halted the harvest and damaged the agricultural community. Then in 2020 when the pandemic hit, at least one person per household lost their job and the number of families receiving food aid decreased as they did not have food to give. Poverty got so severe in 2020 that a quarter of the households prescribed medicine could not afford it. (Poverty & Equity Brief Zimbabwe, 2021) Mining has not been doing well either since during the first quarter of 2021 gold mining was down by 30%. Along with this major loss, mining has always been an issue since there is a lot of illegal gold mining happening, and the mining licensing laws allow foreign countries to mine there for years on end for a minute price. (Lewis, 2021) However, the economic issues have been improving slightly starting in 2021, because the GDP grew from -7.8 in 2020 to 8.5. (GDP Growth (Annual %) | Data, 2010) Also, it has

received nearly a million Covid-19 vaccination donations from a multitude of countries allowing vaccines to be available to the general public. (Zimbabwe Receives Nearly One Million COVID-19 Vaccine Doses from COVAX, 2021)

World Bank funded banana farming would aid in the eradication of poverty. This is a realistic solution because banana trees are easy to manage, the farmers can eat the bananas as well as sell them, and it will aid future generations. Banana trees require very little maintenance and only require the occasional trimming of leaves to produce a good harvest. Bananas also rarely reproduce sexually so they are mainly clones of previous bananas. Bananas do not need to be processed in any way before being consumed so they can be eaten straight off the tree. Bananas in Zimbabwe are also currently mainly being grown by widowed women who are trying to provide for their family. This gives families that are already at a disadvantage a way to make money relatively easily and consistently. There is a positive directly proportional relationship between families making more money and the education rate. Thus, the extra income from banana farming will also help the children get good jobs in the future. The World Bank would lead this project since it will help reduce poverty rates which will improve schooling. The government's role would handle getting the supplies to the farmers as well as providing fertilizer and pesticides at a discounted price that farmers can actually pay. The community's role would be to take charge of actually planting and taking care of the bananas. A universal base income set by the government would help farmers afford to grow their crops, as well as buy fertilizer and pesticides. The role of women would need to be considered since women have traditionally been the ones growing the agricultural products. This project is sustainable because bananas do not require a lot of care, bananas are planted from other bananas instead of seeds, and they can feed farmers directly as well as make the farmer money that they can use.

Poverty is a substantial issue in Zimbabwe due to an unfortunate economic past and present. This issue could be solved by banana farming funded by the World Bank. Banana farming is a fitting solution on account of banana trees being low maintenance, bananas can be both sold as well as consumed by the farmer, and along with bananas supporting the current generation, it will also support future generations since the additional income will allow children to get a better education allowing them to get better jobs. Fixing poverty is the key to a stable and healthy country.

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