

Jaiden Anderson
The Pine School
Hobe Sound, Florida
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Poverty Struggles in Ethiopia

Food security is a topic that is commonly discussed, and is an issue that many countries struggle with rather than excel at. Food security essentially means that people have stable access to food and water at all times. Sadly Ethiopia is one of these countries that is not dominating food security, rather is being decimated by it. Food security in Ethiopia is most strongly influenced by a high percentage of poverty. There are many issues with food security in Ethiopia and the goal as young innovators and thinkers living in this world is to start to find just as many solutions to help stabilize food insecurity in countries like Ethiopia.

Ethiopia might not be the biggest country, but it is certainly above the average size of most, and it is easy to say population is definitely one of the most influential factors when it comes to the five major topics that food security can be divided up into. Ethiopia is home to approximately 128.7 million people, and similar to how food security can be divided into five major topics, the population of any civilization can be divided into two segments; those who live in rural communities and those who live in urban areas. In Ethiopia it is said that around 76.84% of their population lives in rural areas while the other 23.16% resides in more urban areas. Now, you might be wondering how someone's location might impact the level of food security in any country. Well, it is said that rural residents suffer from different levels of food security than those that live in urban areas. Some might even believe it is harder to escape food security when you are located on the rural side. Oftentimes, it is the lack of clean water and sanitation in rural areas that contribute heavily to the struggle to survive. Overall, of the 128.7 million people who call Ethiopia their home, over half of the population (58%) are met with food insecurity. More than 74 MILLION people are wondering if they will have enough food to survive! Ethiopia is longing and searching for solutions to the numerous challenges to their food security. (Worldometer n.d.)

Ethiopia is looking for more people to help, both from within and from without. As a representative republic, the government has decided to use 38.5 million hectares of their land, using almost 34 percent of the total land available to them to provide food within and export income from without. From this land, they export 3 major crops: coffee, flowers, and vegetables. The type of land that Ethiopia is dealing with varies throughout different regions and highlands.

Ethiopia faces many challenges to food security, but the most significant may be its widespread poverty. Poverty is not a singular problem either, as there are many contributing factors to poverty that require attention. Now, as mentioned in earlier parts of this essay, population and poverty has a major impact on food insecurity, but first I will speak about the population side. The average household population is around 5 people, usually these members will be found working on their land of 2.2 acres, farming. Even though other jobs are offered in Ethiopia, farming is dominant. Ethiopians typically choose the farming

path due to the higher wages because these wages are hard to find in other jobs, but this is not to say that the wages are high. Farming is the ideal job because workers can make up to 55 US dollars a month, which ideally would be enough to pay for basic food. Basic foods that are easier for Ethiopians to acquire are grains like teff, millet, and sorghum, as well as various vegetables, legumes, and roots/tubers. Of these common Ethiopian foods, the most beneficial is teff, which is rich in protein, fiber, and essential minerals such as iron, calcium, and potassium.

Even though Ethiopia might be stronger in the food aspect, they lack the education to aspire to be anything but a farmer. Education helps with planning and strengthening infrastructure to better grow and distribute food. Education is free, but only up to a certain level and that is where most are discouraged, and proceed to find their place on the farm. Those are only a few of the hardships that Ethiopians must deal with, for only 57% of them have access to safe drinking water and another 28% stable sanitation. All of which leads to bad health and is difficult to manage due to a lack of hospitals. In addition to struggles with clean water and adequate sanitation, other difficulties that many Ethiopians face are lack of electricity, transportation, telephones, and local markets. Much of this continues to be due to a cycle of poverty, which is the most prominent struggle in Ethiopia.

Ethiopia is only one out of approximately 59 countries that continues to suffer due unstable food security. Despite Ethiopia's economic pushes since 1990 they continue to struggle with providing enough food, water, and education to their population of 128.7 million people. Although 128.7 million people represents a significant number of mouths to feed, countries with even more people proceed to outpace countries like Ethiopia. This should give hope to Ethiopians, while also begging for an answer to the question, "if larger countries can create food security, how can one learn from those countries to then do the same?" How do countries like the United States of America, with an even greater population almost doubling in size, not have this same issue? Well, the most simple and logical answer to this pressing question, is the economic advantages of the U.S and other countries and the economic disadvantages that Ethiopia faces.

When thinking about the question, "how is poverty impacting Ethiopia's food security?" a few interesting answers presented themselves. With 68% of Ethiopia facing poverty, citizens now have trouble gaining access to food and efficient agricultural productivity. Another good question is, "what is poverty?" In Ethiopia, poverty is defined as making under \$2.15 a day. Now onto the why. The reason that Ethiopia is faced with extensive challenges can be traced back to the farming heritage. As stated earlier, most Ethiopian families take on the task of farming, and heavily rely on rain, but rain is not consistent, so the crops begin to dry and production is halted. This is something that humans try to predict via the weatherman, but don't always succeed, but Ethiopia lacks the technology to foresee when it might rain or be scolding hot. Ultimately, all of these uncertainties and challenges play a major role in harming Ethiopia's ability to obtain a semi-stable food security, due to the limited resources, lack of job opportunities, and other many factors.

Poverty isn't just driven by lack of predicting rain, but instead is influenced by many other factors including lack of education in both rural and urban areas, but especially in rural areas. When humans in general are unable to receive a decent education, it closes doors to better job situations that would in return bring a higher income. These are causes of poverty and due to this poverty, farmers are unable to

update their tools which leads to a slower and more inefficient production process. Even though poverty affects a majority of all people in Ethiopia, it is said through many resources that it has a higher effect on rural areas, especially women in rural areas. However, it doesn't just stop there, poverty continues to affect many other segments of the population in unfortunate ways. For example, the historically underrepresented groups find themselves often excused from any socioeconomic life and are met with many difficult obstacles along the journey to be so much more than an underrepresented person. Not only does this group of people face an identity crisis, but so does the refugee population when they can't be given all of the materials and support they need to be who they could be. It is evident that poverty is a major obstacle to many different people residing in Ethiopia.

One topic that might not have been made clear is the extent to which poverty can harm the surrounding environment. When the word poverty is spoken into the atmosphere, it can instill a fear into many people that then begins to cloud their judgement. So, instead of farming with a purpose they begin to panic and overfarm which can lead to deforestation and ruining of crops. When this extra pressure is added to the land to overproduce crops, it can lead to what is known as soil erosion, which in turn will harm the land's fertility and productivity. Without fertile soil to farm on, many people soon lose a source of food and income which only increases Ethiopia's poverty. So, as one can see after learning a tiny portion of how poverty is extensively affecting and hurting Ethiopia, one could also understand why solutions need to be made by young thinkers such as myself and my peers.

At the age of 16, I have grown up in a world where people seem to many times only listen to what they want to hear and to what benefits themselves. They don't want to take on other peoples' struggles. Also, people want to find the easy way out, or a quick solution, and when there isn't a quick solution, they move on and don't want to try and help the people who don't have an easy way out. Throughout my life, I have been taught that giving is more blessed than receiving. To watch that smile light up on someone's face, when they receive your gift of time and effort, that is the greatest feeling. This is the feeling that I, as a young entrepreneur, am aspiring to bring into the world of agriculture, for countries that need help with food security.

Some solutions that I am about to present to you focus around my church community that I have grown up in. My church, Christ Fellowship, is a non-profit that truly exemplifies the message of reaching out and helping others. In less fortunate communities they are there, when mothers need help they are there, and when poor countries don't have water or education they build wells and schools. These are a few of the practices I hope to initiate in a poverty ridden country like Ethiopia. So, to begin I would reach out to an organization such as Christ Fellowship, Habitat for Humanity, or Action against Hunger. Habitat for Humanity has already begun to do similar work to what I am suggesting in Kenya, by partnering with families to help build and renovate homes. Organizations such as these have over and over again been proven as successful, as they have taken their operations to other countries, Habitat for Humanity partnering with over 70 countries alone. All of these organizations branch out to countries in need where they might require fresh water or education to branch into better job opportunities. For an organization such as Christ fellowship I would speak to the leadership, Pastors Todd and Julie, about taking a supportive group out to Ethiopia in hopes of building sustainable waterwells to keep the people hydrated and in hopes of watering their farms even when the clouds don't wish to rain. I would also ask them for their support in gaining a group of architects who could implement a school system built high enough up,

like homes that struggle with floods such as Ethiopia does. With a more stable schooling system, students and adults would be able to go into other jobs than just small family farming. I would also reach out to Habitat for Humanity with a goal to build homes on sturdy stilts so that when floods do emerge their precious houses are not washed away and they could continue to live and work in order to provide support for their family. Finally, I would contact Action Against Hunger to feed the mouths of Ethiopians that do not make enough due to poverty issues, to ensure that they would not be malnourished and instead would thrive in a country that has ever so many challenges.

With these plans in place, like installing water towers and housing, the extent to which Ethiopia suffers from food insecurity would be greatly diminished. Relying on rain wouldn't be such a dire need, and families wouldn't have to worry about their houses being washed away by floods.

While there are already solutions in place to help make a change, there is not a big enough change happening to where food insecurity is not as devastating. There are many international and multilateral organizations, US government agencies and their partners, and Non-governmental organizations. While unique solutions might already exist, there is clearly still a need for more to be created and put into effect. Oftentimes organizations such as these are non-profits, so to ensure that they remain open and able to make life-altering changes, I could begin work in my own community trying to raise funds for these non-profits.

It would not be fair if these solutions were only available to certain groups, so as a person wishing to make the world a better place, I would hope to make these solutions available to all of Ethiopia that may be suffering. Some of these solutions may not have been done in Ethiopia, but they do have their own plan in place. Ethiopia has already begun improving agricultural productivity, improving access to basic needs such as food and electricity, and helping improve infrastructure. From the time period 2004-2016, a change had started to take place, and from 39% of people in poverty soon shrank to 24%. However, in recent years, the trend has gone the opposite way and poverty is spiking again, which is why new solutions must be implemented.

Hopefully, with the rise of Ethiopia's strengths, such as agriculture and infrastructure, the rate of poverty will start to decrease. Countries similar to Ethiopia include South Sudan. South Sudan also suffers from poverty and has tried to tackle it in a similar way by creating new job opportunities and also contacting various organizations (UN World Food Programme). This is an organization that would also have a great impact on helping get Ethiopia back on the right track. These are all solutions I would recommend to take to Ethiopia. One is not better than the other and all three/four organizations would improve Ethiopia in ways that would brighten their day. (UN World Food Programme, ND)

Even though one solution is not better than the other, there is one organization that would be able to do it all. This organization's name is Christ Fellowship. Since I have seen them do this kind of work before in Kenya, who's to say they wouldn't want to spread kindness and do it again in a country like Ethiopia? So, ultimately I would hone in on this solution and find a way to make the impact everlasting on Ethiopia.

How might this all get done? Well it wouldn't be easy and there are limitations. One major problem could be the amount of people willing and able to help. This problem could potentially be eliminated if strategic

promotion was done. However, due to government leaders in countries like these, aid might not always make its way to the people and just stop with the rulers. The government and their rulers could potentially be an obstacle, but Ethiopia is already working on this via the PEPFAR (The U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDs Relief). It is a program that partners with Ethiopia's Ministry of Health to help decrease health issues. This would all need to be done in a non-invasive way, with the goal of not harming any cultural norms, such as hospitality, places for elders, and not disrupting the tight knit families and community. Before any of this would begin, a formal set of rules would be laid down to inform people of these cultural norms, so they would not destroy these practices. Input and buy-in from Ethiopians would be key. Ultimately, the goal is to co-create sustainable solutions for struggling countries such as Ethiopia, to restore happiness and stability to their lives.

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