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Somalia, Civil Unrest & Sustainable Agriculture

Somalia: Divided by Internal Conflict and Starved by Dehumanization

In a society where young children are enduring daily hardships instead of attending school and tens of thousands of people are dying from starvation, there is little hope left for a brighter future unless change happens. The people in Somalia have lost hope that the infrastructure and basic resources needed to re-establish the livable income they had 27 years ago will come back due to an internal political war. In this Sub-Saharan country, poverty and hunger have dehumanized people and stripped them of civil rights. To overcome the issues of internal civil unrest and food insecurity, Somalia needs to impose both sanctions on feuding regional political groups and create sustainable agricultural reforms to establish a more socially, politically, and economically cohesive nation.

Somalia is a country of geographic extremes featuring a hot dry climate covering savana and semi-desert; thus the people have developed demanding economic survival strategies. The landscape includes a coastal mountain range off the Indian Ocean, but the majority of land is flat (Britanica). Somalia's population is over 15 million and growing due to the high fertility rate of 6.26%, which is fourth highest in the world (Lewis & Janzen 2018). The rural population of the country reached an all-time high of 82.7% in 1960, and an all-time low of 60% in 2016. (Helgi Library - Rural Population in Somalia). Both percentages show urbanization trends that there is need for industrialization so that over half of the population can have access to urbanized community commodities such as: healthcare, education, employment, paved roads, and electricity.

Daily life in Somalia is challenging. Many people, in both rural and cities alike, lack electricity and functioning tap water. Farmers live in round huts called "mundals" made of sticks and hides (Somalia). Milk from camels, goats, and cows is a major food for nomadic families. Meat is eaten rarely and diets mainly consist of: millet, durra, honey, dates, bread, and tea. Women cook over an outdoor charcoal or wood stove and usually in a communal kitchen. City dwellers live in stone or brick homes that are covered in plaster or cement and usually do not have windows. Along with all of the challenges facing the country, women have up to six children which worsens the food scarcity problem. Finally, as an arid country with both nomadic people and farmers, Somalis belong to clans, such as the Al-Shabaab group. It was such extreme ideological groups that brought on Somalia's violence that exists today.

Mohamed Siad Barre became the President and Military Dictator in 1969. Barre attempted to declare Somalia a socialist state in 1970, but because this outlawed clan loyalties, many disagreed and allegations were made against him for abusing human rights. Civil unrest in the country grew and divided factions further. In 1991, Barre was forced out of office and he fled to Nigeria (Britannica "Mohamed Siad Barre" 2016)/(Somalia). In this period of turmoil, the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) planned to intervene in Somalia's internal affairs through agricultural and economic reforms. Their goal was to spur macroeconomic development, but because Somalia's economy had no stable foundation, their aim to provide the people with opportunities never succeeded.

Rather, it allowed outside organizations to exploit Somalia. A pattern of currency devaluation followed their intervention. Global trade liberalization with international competitors was supposed to reduce budget deficits. Coincidentally, the trade agreement led to massive cuts in the public sector and social services programs. "The recurrent famines of the 1980s and 1990s are in large part the consequence of IMF-World Bank "economic medicine". Ten years of IMF economic medicine laid the foundations for the country's transition towards economic dislocation and social chaos" (Chossudovsky). Since the state could not invest in social security nets, there was no stability in the nation, ending in less or no income. For example, food became more expensive because Somalia's private sector stood no chance against the global competition ("Top Causes of Poverty in Somalia" 2018).

Somalia suffers from several interlinked issues. It is marginalized as a sovereign nation being dependent on mostly western nations, mainly for food, which the people of Somalia cannot produce themselves. Somalis are also suffering from the largest humanitarian crisis the United Nations (UN) has seen, as first announced in 2011. There are close to 6.7 million people in need of humanitarian aid, 350,000 malnourished children under five, and around 260,000 people who died of starvation in 2011 ("Humanitarian Crisis in Somalia" 2018). The constant battle between the different Somali factions and political groups is responsible for the mismanagement in governance and public administration.

The solutions to these problems appear achievable. In 2012, Somalia drafted and finalized a new constitution. The current government style is a federal parliamentary republic, meaning the state relies on governance both at the national and regional levels. Within Somalia, there are 18 different administrative regions and 18 different political parties and leaders, who vary ideologically on the political spectrum. Two party examples include: The Justice and Communist Party and the Somali National Party ("The World Factbook: Somalia" 2018). Out of the capital city of Mogadishu, multiple different political associations can be seen as clans and sub-clan factions either supporting or often opposing political leaders within the Upper House, the Federal Member State presidents, and former current presidents.

One solution to combat the violence and civil unrest would be for the Somali Federal Government to implement laws and a series of steps that state how political associations can be sanctioned for attempting to accuse, steal from, threaten, or exploit another subnational parliament. Canada, in comparison, also has multiple political parties, such as the Liberals, Conservatives, New Democratic Party, and Green Party. The different ideologies allow for Canadians to have choices in selecting their leaders and opportunities for change. Somalia was historically run by the wealthy, elite, and powerful factions who assume power and take what they want with no consideration as to what others need. There have been numerous fights between people with different ideologies and beliefs because people steal what little food they may have or simply fight for a position of power to earn more rights for their clan. Some of these groups plan coups and terrorize innocent citizens to bring fear (Poverty and Famine in Somalia: The Root Causes). With a solid federal government in place supported by the UN, Somalia could move in the direction of a responsible government. These sanctions could include: limiting their participation in elections, losing political power for a certain period of time, or limiting the right to speak in the House of People. The state should also request for a presence by UN delegates who can monitor this progress. An additional solution is more foreign aid and interaction with the international community. It is crucial that outsiders take a stand in continuing to stabilize the government so that investment in food production can begin. Organizations such as Oxford International and Unicef need

the full support of industrialized nations to help overcome food scarcity.

Once civil unrest has been addressed, attention could be focused on investing time and money into sustainable agriculture and food scarcity. Famine and drought have struck Somalis drastically. These droughts led to production failure characterized by a decrease in the production of crops, which was one of the central components of the economy. This decrease in production led to food inflation, which left food unaffordable. With these current issues, there needs to be immediate support for Somalis ("Causes and Solutions to Hunger in Somalia" 2016).

A logical step in the solution process is to simply provide food to starving Somali people. Without water and food, people will be unable to work on new farms and agricultural initiatives. Regina, Saskatchewan has an organization called the Regina Food Bank, which provides support to the local community in need. Somalia could implement a food bank, but on a national scale, to feed millions of people. Providing adequate food would come from international aid donations and feeding programs. Programs such as the Food for Peace Reform Act of 2014 was introduced to increase economic effectiveness with United States food aid. ("Causes and Solutions to Hunger in Somalia" 2016). This is only a temporary solution to the extreme food shortage until self-sufficiency.

Additionally, initiating sustainable agricultural practices could be another solution. It is important to have international aid organizations and even external companies work with farmers, urban and rural communities, as well as with federal and sub-national governments to reform the agricultural industry. This is an opportunity where Canada, and Saskatchewan in particular, could assist. Canada produces 67% of the world's lentils, and provinces such as Saskatchewan have found ways to innovate agricultural practices around food production to produce more using fewer natural resources such as land and water, as the country deals with a tough seasonal climate. In 2011, Saskatchewan's production accounted for 79% of the total pulse crops in Canada (Statistics Canada "Pulses in Canada" 2015). With Saskatchewan's dedication to agricultural advancements and leadership in food production, the province could mentor Somalia ("Saskatchewan takes lead" 2018). The production methods used reduce the impact on the environment and make better use of arable land. Somalia's economic structure is supported by the nation's agricultural and pastoral sectors. These markets account for nearly 65% of Somalia's gross domestic product, with nearly 40% of that being livestock (Somalia Economic Structure). International corporations could focus on a variety of these markets for further development. Livestock is a crucial component of the country's agriculture industry, as are basic foods grown by farmers, such as: bananas, dates, corn, sorghum, beans and rice. The major livestock exports are: sheep and goats accounting for nearly 91% of total animal exports ("Livestock and Agriculture"). Somalia only depends on a few countries for exports such as Yemen, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia. Thus more investment, infrastructure development for Somalia's pastoralism and improved branding give Somalia more opportunities to grow the livestock sector. The Somali Development and Reconstruction Bank are also focusing on land preparation. This is because rain-fed farms account for more than 50% of the total cultivated land, while irrigated land is only close to 20% ("Livestock and Agriculture"). Fortunately, the dry season allows for good profits from the irrigated farms, because vegetables and fruits are low markets during these seasons.

Another possibility for agricultural support could include research into Genetically Modified Organisms

(GMOs) specifically for Somalia's climate and vegetation. Though GMOs are seen to be controversial due to lack of understanding by the public, GMOs play a huge role in helping the hungry, especially in countries where there is a lack of arable land and agricultural infrastructure. Using genetic technology, crops could be modified to handle droughts and make them robust in arid areas. Planting genetically modified crops, specifically those more nutritionally-enriched, in nations with extreme climates has the ability to make their populations less vulnerable to malnourishment due to a more substantial diet and increased food yields.

Urban farming could help address food insecurity in cities as poverty is becoming more urban-afflicted. Nearly a third of worldwide hunger is in urban areas, so it is appropriate to invest in advancing food production in those areas ("Causes and Solutions to Hunger in Somalia" 2016). Urban farming could include vertical farming, which uses little space to grow produce for the population. "Vertical farms [in Europe and Japan] use highly technological lighting and climate controlled buildings to grow crops like leafy greens or herbs indoors while using less water and soil" (Ngumbi 2018). In Africa, vertical farming could be as simple as stacked crates or sack gardens. With a low cost of \$0.12 in United States equivalent dollars, sack gardens are made from sisal fibres and "use local materials and fewer resources, yet give yields that help farmers achieve the same outcomes as vertical farms in the developed world"(Ngumbi 2018) .

Connecting back to Saskatchewan, Somalia could open up trade agreements/negotiations so Saskatchewan based-companies could assess the Somali food production situation and provide resources and education to Somalis. Saskatchewan businesses could add education about different farming practices and food production to move Somalia forward towards sustainability in their agricultural development. Furthermore, international corporations and agricultural companies could help reform the industry and farming practices of the people. Somali Agricultural Technical Group (SATG) is a registered and non-profit association composed of Somali professionals working to restore the country's agriculture industry. One of their projects was to recreate the Filsan mung bean, which seeds were lost during the civil unrest. Mung beans are legumes that are rich in fiber and protein, however this particular seed of mung bean was larger, had higher yield potential, matured faster, and was easier to cook. ("Agriculture"). In 2002, SATG received a small amount of Filsan seeds from the World Vegetable Centre in Taiwan. The seed were then sent to an experimental station in Minnesota, United States. Finally, the seed was sent to International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics in Nairobi, Kenya to multiply the number of seeds. In 2005, Somalia was distributed 110kg of Filsan mung bean seed to farmers ("Agriculture"). However, agricultural production in Somalia continues to suffer a high percentage of grain loss due to poor harvest. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations could collaborate with SATG, and SDRB in order to continue the rehabilitations of previous resources, monitor fertilization and water usage to improve crops such as the mung bean and others.

A last step to acquire agricultural sustainability is to invest in women, primarily through education, who do much of the agricultural work in Somalia. In Africa, 80% of farmworkers are women ("Causes and Solutions to Hunger in Somalia" 2016). Even though they work with food all day, women do not often get the adequate amount of food to keep themselves or families healthy. Investing in women and giving them power, ability to afford, and obtain food in the future through employment opportunity and equal rights ensures their children are born healthy and their families will not suffer from hunger.

For nearly 25 years, the collapse of Somalia's government left the nation and people fragmented. Somalia is one of the poorest countries in the world because it is in the midst of a famine due to food insecurity and political turmoil between feuding ideological groups. This has left the people unable to establish a sustainable future. With further support from foreign aid, and innovative advances in agricultural technology and practices, life will become better for Somalis. As discussed, there are realistic methods of creating a socially moral, politically, and economically responsible government. In the next 25 years, the hope is for Somalia to end their internal civil unrest, initiate food production, and ensure their children will not grow up hungry for another lifetime.

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