

Rylee Dean

3/2/2020

Mrs. Lauer

Biology 10

The Water and Sanitization Crisis in Afghanistan

Afghanistan is commonly known for being corrupt. They are a country filled with many problems spanning from poverty to war and many things in between. All of these problems should be brought to light but I simply can't do that in one essay. Instead I am going to be diving into one of the issues I perceive as very important, the water and sanitation dilemma in Afghanistan. Although this problem isn't as well-known as war or poverty issues, it is harmful and should be displayed more so that more people can brainstorm to help.

For some background, Afghanistan is a country located in Southern Asia near India and Pakistan (Hopkins, Benjamin D. "Afghanistan."). Afghanistan is composed of roughly 38 million people, 25.4 percent of that being urban and 74.6 of that being rural ("Afghanistan-Agriculture"). The citizens are under the leadership of President Ashraf Ghani in the Islamic Republic. Some nations that use this same government includes, Pakistan, Mauritania, and Iran ("Afghanistan: Government"). Currently, 6 percent of the Afghani land is cultivated. The average farm size in Afghanistan is 1.34 hectares which is about 3.3 acres ("Afghanistan- Agriculture"). The climate in Afghanistan is composed of three different areas, the northern plains, the central highlands, and the southwestern lowlands. Overall Afghanistan has quite hot summers and cold winters.

In the typical Afghani home there are on average 8 people per family. For dinner they like to enjoy kababs, qorma, shorma, and lots of bread (Hopkins, Benjamin D. "Afghanistan."). They get this food from the local markets if they have one or from farms and hunting. The most popular job in Afghanistan is farming taking up about 70 percent of the job force (Hopkins, Benjamin D. "Afghanistan."). The average wage in Afghanistan is around 450 AFN which is about \$5.93 per hour. People in Afghanistan lack clean water, toilets, electricity, etc. Many people in Afghanistan are not able to get jobs due to lack of opportunity.

And just for some background knowledge here are some facts that are important to know. Less than a third of the country has access to clean water. Their main source of healthy water, the Hindu Kush mountain range, is not doing well do to the melting of glaciers (Birtley, T. (2018, March 25). Afghanistan faces severe clean water shortage.). Years and Years of war has ruined infrastructure meaning the structures that were used to exert fresh water were ruined (HydrateLife, 25, H., Hanna,).

Now onto what we can do to help Afghanistan. To start off Afghanistan lacks tremendously when it comes to water sanitization. To put this problem into perspective, ranked number four in

the top ten diseases in Afghanistan is diarrheal diseases. This disease 15,977 people in 2014, 7.10 percent of the population (Casey Marks. "The Top 10 Diseases in Afghanistan And Their Treatment. "). Deaths from this disease can be prevented by having clean, sanitized water to rehydrate themselves. In the Afghani's peoples' case they do not have this clean water to do so.

Not only do the Afghani people have barley any decent water to drink but even the perceived as healthy water is most likely contaminated. An article called "Water Quality In Afghanistan" posted by The Borgen Project touched on the subject saying "Not only is there less water, but the water that is available is contaminated. In most major cities, underground water supplies have been compromised, due to the lack of canalization, proper waste management and proper waste disposal." Different places like local hospitals can be contributing to the diseases caused from compromised water! Hospitals in Afghanistan are known to put their hazardous medical waste on top of or below the ground, this medical waste can over time seep into the water supply (Steven Jenkins, "Water Quality In Afghanistan.).

How can we help to change the water sanitation in Afghanistan? That question isn't an easy one to answer but it boils down to educating the people of Afghanistan. Although we realize how horrible this situation is, a lot of the people in Afghanistan do not know and have not been taught how dangerous it can be. The government does not help, their lack of concern for their own people is frightening and makes me realize that the only way that we are going to see change is if we do it ourselves.

Giving education about the current issue can help citizens from using unsanitary water. These lessons would include conversation about how you can tell whether or not the water is sanitary and also show how to sanitize water. If we start doing this now, the current generation can teach their kids who can teach their kids and so on and so forth. The reason this is such a large issue is due to the lack of knowledge of the subject.

So what can we do? Help educate the citizens. Start educating the people in America. Implementing this into even elementary school lessons would be extremely helpful, these kids can go home and tell their parents. Spreading the news to people in our nation, raising awareness, motivating people to do something even if small. Having trained volunteers go to the schools and have a day dedicated to learning about this issue would be a huge step into the right direction. Doing that or even having a meeting with the teachers and educating them as well giving them posters and other resources so that they can go and teach the kids themselves.

Some of the citizens may know that the water is unsanitary but have no other choice because that is the only water they have. How can we help them then? Some great options to help the Afghani people would to build healthy water centers in the towns of Afghanistan. In these water centers we build wells that will allow for access to healthy, sanitized water. You see, as we have previously mentioned Afghanistan has water, but the water they have is simply not healthy for humans to drink, wells are a way to take that same unhealthy water and convert it into sustainable, healthy, drinking water!

Wells have been proven to work in Africa. Africa undergoes some of the same crisis's as Afghanistan, one of those being the water and sanitization issue. A project called "Water Wells for Africa (WWFA)" has used the same method using well systems and has seen some amazing things come out of it. By using these same techniques, in Afghanistan, we could see a positive change.

The Afghani people are being cheated out of basic needs that they need as humans. Think about how often we drink water, how humans need water to survive, now think about that not being something you can just get. Think about all of the people that die annually due to the lack of this basic necessity.

An area where every citizen can come to get clean and well sanitized water would help the community out greatly. Even if a few of us were able to go out there and with the locals, build some wells, this could help the communities greatly. This may even inspire their government to help as well. Starting fundraisers to help with the costs could also help get the word out there and help bring it more attention. Showing people a raw and true look into what these people have to deal with could help people realize just how bad it is and maybe even get them motivated to help!

Going back for a moment to again talk about WWFA, I wanted to note an extremely important message that they give out, that being "We believe clean water is the first step out of poverty, and that those without any should have it first." Why is this so important? I think as Americans we tend to forget just how blessed we are, yes we have many weak spots including a plentiful plate of injustices that go unnoticed, but we are lucky to have things that we don't even think about like healthy water. If I can do anything I want to motivate those who have a larger voice to stand up and use that voice for those who need and deserve to be heard. Afghanistan is not going to get the help it needs unless people like you and me use the voice and power we have to do something about it.

Another possibility to help assist the people of Afghanistan would be using water purification tablets. If you have never heard about these tablets, here is some background information on how they work, these tablets are used. By hikers most commonly to give them the ability to drink water from unsafe waterways like rivers but have also been used in emergencies like hurricanes when there is a shortage in safe drinking water. These tablet take unsafe pathogens found in unsafe water and kill them to make the water then safe to consume (How Water Purification Tablets Work). If we could supply places like hospitals or public areas of gathering with these tablets it could also be another option for the Afghani people to have the ability to easily sanitize their water.

Now, I see the best possible option as being able to get volunteers and go to Afghanistan where we would go to the different villages and build a well, even one would do so much, and also place posters in common areas for the people to hang out. Furthermore, giving hospitals and

schools the proper education on the hazards of unsanitized water. As well as going to communities to have one on one conversations.

So much success has been exhibited through past missions to help struggling countries through installing wells, we have a chance to really help the citizens of Afghanistan. Multiple villages have been helped in Africa due to the amazing organization WWFA, if we were able to make a similar organization, we could make some serious progress in the health and well-being of this struggling country.

This all may seem like a leap of faith but these people are in desperate need! Most of the people in Afghanistan don't even realize the type of danger that they are in by drinking water or maybe they do, but have no other choice. They need people who are willing to take risks to help them. It is a small cost for a great reward. The people of Afghanistan could use our help. With a mixture of getting the word out there, going to hospitals to teach the workers about proper sanitation and how to properly get rid of waste, teaching the students of Afghanistan about the risks of contaminated water and building them wells where healthy water will be held, we could really make a change.

This problem is fixable; we can work together to help the citizens of Afghanistan live a much better life. Although this isn't going to fix all of their problems it can help to start the slow upward movement to a better life. We have the ability to go out there to help them, if we get the information out there, show how a basic necessity here can be so dangerous there, we could really get the interest in others. Hopefully even enough interest that they will decide to donate or help out themselves!

We have to do something about this, and now that we have an idea on how, it is all about doing what we can to start pushing it forward. You may be sitting here thinking you don't have a big enough voice in this world to help make a change, but we have the ability to have a much larger voice than we think. When we put all of our voices together we can make a big movement. In conclusion, with a little bit of will power and a lot of dedication to spread the word and helping others to learn, little by little, we can help to fix the water and sanitation problem in Afghanistan.

1. "Afghanistan Population (live)" worldometer, worldometers.info, 1 jul. 2019, www.worldometers.info/world-population/afghanistan-population/. Accesed 10 feb 2020.
2. "Afghanistan: Government" globalEDGE, , Michigan State University, 2020, globaledege.msu.edu/countries/afghanistan/government. Accessed 10 feb 2020.
3. "Afghanistan- Agriculture" Nations Encyclopedia, Advameg, Inc., 2020, www.nationsencyclopedia.com/Asia-and-Oceania/Afghanistan-AGRICULTURE.html. , accessed 10 feb 2020.
4. Hopkins, Benjamin D. "Afghanistan." World Book Advanced, World Book, 2020, <https://worldbookonline.com/advanced/article?id=ar006700&st=afghanistan#h18>. Accessed 25 Feb. 2020.
5. HydrateLife. "Afghanistan's Water Crisis." HydrateLife, March 28, 2013, <https://www.hydratelife.org/afghanistans-water-crisis/>
6. Casey Marks. "The Top 10 Diseases in Afghanistan And Their Treatment.", The Borgen Project, September 24, 2016, <https://borgenproject.org/top-10-diseases-in-afghanistan/>
7. Steven Jenkins, "Water Quality In Afghanistan.", The Borgan Project, August 16, 2016, <https://borgenproject.org/water-quality-afghanistan/>
8. (n.d.). Retrieved August 31, 2020, from <https://waterwellsforafrica.org/who-are-we/>
9. How Water Purification Tablets Work. (n.d.). Retrieved September 04, 2020, from <https://www.livestrong.com/article/169622-how-water-purification-tablets-work/>
10. Birtley, T. (2018, March 25). Afghanistan faces severe clean water shortage. Retrieved September 05, 2020, from <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/03/afghanistan-faces-severe-clean-water-shortage-180325132745182.html>
11. HydrateLife, 25, H., Hanna, 9, C., Cierra, 16, H., . . . A, S. (2017, March 24). Afghanistan's Water Crisis. Retrieved September 05, 2020, from <https://www.hydratelife.org/afghanistans-water-crisis/>