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Tanzania, Factor 11: Malnutrition

Malnutrition in Tanzania

The United Republic of Tanzania faces many challenges today. Tanzania is located in Eastern Africa, borders the Indian Ocean, and is in between Kenya and Mozambique. Tanzania is about the twice the size of California. The terrain of the land is plains along the coast, a central plateau, and highlands in the north and south. Mount Kilimanjaro is the highest point in Africa, and it is located in Tanzania. Lake Victoria is located northern Tanzania, and it is the world's second largest fresh water lake. The population of Tanzania is 49,639,138 people. There are a few languages that the people speak in Tanzania, such as: Swahili, English, Arabic, and many local languages. Tanzania's government is a republic, and they have presidential elections every five years. The president of Tanzania since 2005 is President Jakaya Kikwete and the vice president is Mohammed Gharib Bilal (CIA.gov).

According to the 2012 census, the average family size is about five people (UNFPA Tanzania). Many families are extended families, but in urban areas nuclear family units are showing up more (Robert G. Carlson). For food, Tanzanians usually eat ugali, which is made from cornmeal or cassava flour. Ugali is usually served with sauce, vegetables, meat, or fish (Our Africa). For breakfast, sweet rolls and biscuits are usually served. In rural areas, buttermilk or chicken broth is served for breakfast. In the cities popcorn, peanuts, hard candy, and dried fruit are eaten as snacks most of the time. Other snacks are corn on the cob, fried plantains, and sweet potatoes. Drinks served at most meals are fruit drinks, spiced coffee, and tea. Tanzanians make their own alcoholic beverages from plantain, corn, and honey, which are served at local bars. Desserts are usually served with honey and pineapple or other fruits. On special occasions, Tanzanians usually serve pilau, which is a meal that consists of rice, potato, and flavored meat (Hitton).

For children in Tanzania, primary education is free. Primary education starts when a child is around the age of six or seven and lasts for seven years. Since 2002, the number of children enrolled in primary education is nearly 100%. Because primary education is free and there are lots of children enrolled, there are not enough teachers to support small classes. So, many classes can end up having more than fifty children. Families are supposed to provide their children with notebooks and school supplies for school, but because some rural families can't provide supplies all the time, often rural children stop going to school. After primary education, secondary school comes next. Secondary school starts at the age of fourteen and lasts for four years. However, only one in ten children go on to secondary school because some families are not able to provide the money for their child (SOS Children).

Access to health care in Tanzania is spotty since many people live in rural communities. Without vehicles, getting to a hospital or medical center will be difficult. For people who can get to a medical center, the medical centers have a short number of trained workers as well as a lack of medical equipment. Many people will go to a traditional healer instead of a doctor. Most of the time, the healer can heal a person successfully with herbs, but sometimes they can't if a person needs a stronger drug that only a doctor could prescribe (SOS Children).

In Iowa, most farmers today try to get their hands on the latest and newest equipment. However, in Tanzania, seventy percent of farmers still use a hand hoe to farm. Rural farmers farm around .9 to 3 hectares. Due to the small amount of land a farmer has, it means that a farmer can barely provide enough for their family. Seventy percent of rural income comes from food and cash crops (allAfrica). In Tanzania, agriculture only accounts for 27.6 percent of GDP. Some crops grown in Tanzania are coffee, corn, cassava, bananas, and cotton (CIA.gov).

Since Tanzania does not have the most modern agricultural practices, they do not have good opportunities for better agricultural productivity. Unlike the United States, Tanzania has a low input supply, limited technological application, and they have only been using traditional cultivation methods. Also, Tanzania can face many droughts making it harder for the crops to grow and make it to harvest. In Tanzania, there are 44 million hectares of arable land, but only 27% of the land is being cultivated. There are areas that are suitable for irrigation but only .34 million hectares are being irrigated. These are among the causes that cause Tanzania to have low agricultural productivity (Tanzania Daily News).

Since many children do not advance in education after primary education, many of them do not have the skills to earn a better job. Many go and try to do informal work, such as work at food markets, even though they do not make much. The rural families often struggle more since they do not earn as much as wealthy urban families (SOS Children).

People in Tanzania rarely get the amount of nutrients they need in their everyday lives. In Tanzania, many people buy their food from markets. The problem with that is that the food in the markets hardly has any nutrients. Since farmers do not produce and harvest enough crops to earn money, Tanzania's economy stays very low. While Tanzania's economy is low, the market cannot provide abundant food for people (Kitinya).

Since agriculture in Tanzania only accounts for 27.6% of their GDP, many people live on less than a dollar a day (Our Africa). Malnutrition affects Tanzania's agriculture because the people that work on the farm cannot be very productive because they are malnourished. Many of the farmers in Tanzania are women. Women make up 80% of agricultural labor work force in rural areas (Kiishweko). As a woman that is malnourished, they are shorter in height and they may suffer from anemia and micronutrient deficiencies. Since the women that work are malnourished, they most likely will not be able to work their hardest. If they are anemic, they will be very fatigued (Kitinya).

Malnutrition affects a Tanzanian family quite greatly. Tanzania is the third worst affected country in Africa for malnutrition. Over 3.5 million children suffer from malnutrition. In the past ten years, it has been estimated that there has been over 600,000 deaths of children under the age of five (Rweyemamu). That being said, malnutrition contributes to 130 children deaths per day in Tanzania. The children's growth and development is affected due to the lack of micronutrients. One of the best ways to practice better nutrition is to breastfeed children for the first six months of life. Mothers should breastfeed their children because breast milk includes all the nutrients, vitamins, and minerals an infant needs. In Tanzania, many mothers quit exclusively breastfeeding their child after only one month. Only 51% of infants are breastfed at 2-3 months. By the time an infant is around 4-5 months, the percentage of breastfeeding drops to twenty three percent. The percentage drops because of the lack of knowledge mothers have about the importance of breastfeeding their children. Children that are malnourished will most likely suffer from respiratory infections, which will affect their overall development. Children who are iodine deficient can lose around 13.5 IQ points, and iron deficiency will make children more tired and slow. Malnourished children miss more school and do not perform in school as well. Since children are malnourished, they will be less productive as adults. They most likely will be short and weak and will not be able to work as hard. Since many adults have been affected by malnutrition, poor households have a harder time escaping poverty due to the lack of work effort (UNICEF).

Currently, malnutrition is still a factor in people's everyday lives in Tanzania. Food is still difficult for people to get since Tanzania is still food self-sufficient. Malnutrition seems to increase and has made not much improvement in Tanzania. People in Tanzania still do not get the amount of nutrition they need to be healthy. Tanzania's government, along with donors and food processing companies, have created a food fortification program. The program is supposed to help achieve stable nutrition by making sure food

processors put in the right amount of nutrients into food. They have been having difficulties in making progress because there are not many people monitoring food mills and products at the markets do not have the proper levels of micronutrients. In 2011, there was a funded project to help small businesses be able to fortify and sell their grain products at the markets because the government was having difficulties coming up with a standard for the businesses. Despite the help, in 2014 none of the businesses had their products fortified. This was due to the fact that the government made their product illegal to fortify (Robinson, Nyagaya).

Improving nutrition would give Tanzania many benefits. Improving malnutrition would help raise Tanzania's GDP and improve the lives of many people. There would be fewer deaths each day in Tanzania. With improved nutrition, workers would be able to work harder and more efficiently, and not get too tired. Since workers would be working harder, it could help them and their families earn more money. Children would also have a better chance at having a healthier lifestyle and not be underweight. Students that would get improved nutrition would be able to learn and stay focus better in school. Students with better nutrition would also have a better chance at having higher IQ points. Improving the nutrition status in Tanzania would help out everyone because it would help people work harder and children to learn more.

There are some factors that would affect the chance of malnutrition to improve. Climate is one of those factors that affects malnutrition. The climate in Tanzania's coastal areas are more humid and hotter than the inland of Tanzania. Coastal regions usually only receive around 750 mm of rainfall yearly while the inland receives less than 500 mm of rainfall. This could be a problem for farmers since they do not get much rain so that their crops grow. Since farmers rely on rain for their crops, it could be an issue. If they do not have a good growing season, they will not receive much for their harvest, leaving them with little income or food for their families (SOS Children).

To help promote the problem of malnutrition in Tanzania, I could do a few things. I could talk to Iowa's United States Senator about malnutrition and getting help from the United States to help UNICEF. At school, the FFA chapter could do some school fundraisers to help earn some money for people in Tanzania. These may not be big contributions, but they are a good start.

One part of my plan is to talk to Iowa's United States Senator, Joni Ernst. Since she is from around our area, I believe it would be easier to talk to her about this because she may be connected to people that have had the same experience. Also, talking to Joni Ernst could help because she could help us get in touch with UNICEF so we could talk to them about helping Tanzania. Along with UNICEF, I could work with Heifer International.

The other part of my plan is to do some school fundraisers with the help of our local FFA chapter. It is important to get people involved here in Red Oak, Iowa, because a lot of people probably do not understand what it is like to go throughout the day malnourished and living on less than a dollar a day. I believe that if people knew more about Tanzania, they would be more likely to help out. Our FFA Chapter did approve \$150 to donate to Heifer International to purchase a water buffalo from funds raised during a school event.

Overcoming malnutrition in Tanzania would improve many lives. Since malnutrition already contributes to 130 deaths a day, malnutrition should not be taken lightly (UNICEF). Becoming well-nourished is something every person should be able to have a choice to become. Talking about the issue of malnutrition would help get the word out there so that people are aware that many people are not able to go to bed well fed. Talking is just the first step of action. With help from bigger organizations, Tanzania could get the help that they need. Just by sending an animal over to a family in need would be a great start

because it would help families start to become self-reliant. Although right now people in Tanzania may not have the choice to have the proper nutrition, with help from contributions from organizations and outside countries, people in Tanzania could have a chance to live a healthier life.

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