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Ethiopia, Education

Ethiopia: Improving Education Efforts

The country of Ethiopia is located in the Horn of Africa, covering approximately 1,221,900 square kilometers. Its borders include Eritrea to the north, Somalia and Djibouti to the east, Kenya to the south, and Sudan to the west. It is near both the Middle East and Europe, providing access to major ports within the region. The climate in Ethiopia is ecologically diverse, with varying rainfall and temperature levels throughout the country. The Central Plateau has a moderate climate with minimal seasonal temperature variations, with the dry season being November-February. Temperature variations in the Lowlands are greater with heavier rainfall as well. Severe droughts occurred in 1982-84, 1987-88, and 1991. The longstanding negative effects of these droughts can still be seen throughout the country through lack of usable water, limited water for agricultural uses, and food insecurity. The 2020 population of Ethiopia was 115,000,000 as stated by World Population Review. 81% (90,022,234) of the population resides in rural areas and 21.7% (24,941,349) reside in urban areas. The country is led through a federal republic with 3 branches of government: Executive, Judicial, and Legislative. As well as by current President Sahle-Work Zewde, and Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed. From 2018 data, 33.5% of the land (16,870,000 ha) is cultivated in Ethiopia, and the five major cereals: teff, wheat, maize, sorghum, and barley, account for $\frac{3}{4}$ of the land that is cultivated. Ethiopia contributes to the trade economy with its major exports being coffee, cut flowers, oil seeds, gold, and leather products. The average family farm size is less than 1 ha (0.96 ha per small family farm), whereas in the United States the average farm size is 179.79 ha.

The basic household structure in Ethiopia is a traditionally large family and multi-generational. In Ethiopian culture, the wife customarily moves in with the husband's family following marriage. In urban areas, the nuclear family approach is most commonly compared to the traditional large family seen elsewhere in the country. Each urban family typically has at least four children. The number of children increases in rural areas. The average household has three generations within it: the eldest couple, their sons, sons' wives, unmarried daughters, along with grandchildren. It is estimated that 89% of the population lives in standard housing: homes made of wood and mud with thatched or tin roofs in rural areas, and multi-story condominium and apartment buildings in urban areas. According to Habitat for Humanity, 70% of households in both rural and urban areas require total replacement, leaving only 30% in fair condition. The typical Ethiopian diet is low in fats, a traditional staple food is Injera: a thin, fermented bread made from teff flour, water, and a starter. Plant-origin foods such as cereals, legumes, vegetables, and tubers are widely consumed. Most families grow their own food, with specific techniques being required due to the lack of refrigeration and food preservation methods. Eastern Ethiopia is facing a food insecurity crisis due to flooding, desert locust infestations, and the continuous negative impacts of poor harvests.

The three primary industries of Ethiopia are agriculture, mining, and chemicals. There are job opportunities within both the private and public sectors of work. In the private sector, popular jobs include working in telecommunications, energy, and banking industries. There is no legally set minimum wage for those employed in the private sector. The average monthly salaries for both private and public sectors of work range from 2,704.00 ETB (\$55.93 USD) to 9,659.00 ETB (\$199.77 USD). A family of five requires a monthly income of at least 2949.35 ETB (\$61 USD). Families receive additional forms of income through the use of local markets. Subsistence farmers and artisans sell, buy, and trade goods.

42% of the Ethiopian population has access to a clean water supply. Out of this 42%, only 11% have access to adequate sanitation services such as toilets and showers located in their homes. The status of

health care services is low in correlation with the large population size of Ethiopia. There are four main health care delivery systems: Primary Health Care Unit, District Rural Hospital, Zonal Hospital, and Referral Hospital. Hospitals are government-run, resulting in free health care for all citizens. An additional option alongside government-run hospitals is private hospitals, which are affordable to very few people. There are primary, secondary, and tertiary levels of healthcare. Including hospitals, health centers, health stations, health posts, private clinics, Pharmacies, drug shops, and rural drug vendors. Income poverty leads to the inability to improve education and health care. In 2018, health care spending per family was around \$24 USD.

The education system in Ethiopia is underdeveloped, low participation rates are present within all levels of provided education. Ethiopia has one of the highest school dropout rates in the world, with only 50% of enrolled students completing an elementary (primary) school education. The adult literacy rate in 2012 was 39%, increasing to 51.1% in 2020. Males in Ethiopia are statistically more literate with half of the male population demonstrating literacy. Female literacy rates range from $\frac{1}{3}$ to $\frac{2}{3}$ of their respective population. Education is slowly improving, as seen through rising literacy rates, but continues to have its systematic faults. Ethiopia's location in the continent of Africa can contribute to the trend of an insufficient education system. The country is situated in a highly politically unstable region of the world. Along with a hunger crisis lingering throughout the country, there is little government funding that can be used to support educational endeavors. There is also a shortage of well-qualified, educated teachers and education administrators. Without educators, the Ethiopian population as a whole can not be educated. When comparing rural and urban areas, there are fewer schools in rural Ethiopia. In 2011, 36% of rural children were out of school while 11% of urban children were out of school, creating a trend of rural populations being less educated. This proves that it is essential for educational institutions to be present to maintain an educated population. There are little to no higher education institutions located in rural areas, prompting children residing in these locations not to pursue further education and to continue living there. Gender discrepancies are also present within the realm of education. The primary school enrollment rate of girls has increased from 21% to 49% in the past two decades, but the male population remains has higher literacy rates. In secondary education institutions, there are 77 girls per 100 boys. As education goes from primary and secondary options to colleges and tertiary institutions, attendance rates decrease, favoring males over females. Shifting the focus onto a national wide scale, an issue that has been relevant to Ethiopia in 2022, the country is currently fighting in a large-scale civil war: the Tigray war. This crisis is located in the northernmost location of the country within the Tigray region. Refugees from Ethiopia have been both internally and externally displaced due to the large-scale humanitarian harm actions being done. This war itself complicates children's access to obtain an education, simply due to there being no location or resources, these students can utilize to continue their educational endeavors.

Efforts to improve the educational value of Ethiopian students have been made. The Ethiopian government has partnered with donors who invested currency into improving children's access to education. This has been done by abolishing school fees and making education more affordable to low-income families. Expenditure on school construction and maintenance has increased from 8.2% in 1975 to 23.6% in 2009. This increase in spending also applies to the hiring and training of thousands of new teachers, administrators, and education officials. The autonomy of regions and local governments has also increased, giving flexibility to schools when determining the language and curriculum that is taught to students. Communities have begun donating both material and fiscal resources towards creating schools like construction, maintenance, and materials. Education opportunities are offered to minority and indigenous populations, with select higher education institutions providing scholarships for refugees and marginalized populations to pursue their studies. When comparing the current systems in place in Ethiopia to those in England, distinct differences can be seen. Systemwide partnerships have been established with teaching school alliances, Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs), and federations. Teachers are given autonomy over what content is taught within their schools and classrooms. To truly see how other

countries have improved their educational systems, it is important to look at examples from the same country as Ethiopia. The country of Ghana, located in west Africa, previously has a disadvantaged educational system and has continued to improve its education system to reach more students to provide them with their education. Concerning one of the solutions listed, Ghana has taken the opportunity to create Capitation Grants: thus allowing the expansion of education and making it available to all of-age students. Looking at the Ethiopian national federal budget of 287.6 billion, education expenditure for the 2021-22 calendar year accounts for 55 billion. Making up for 19% of the whole federally allocated budget expenditure. Money could be deducted from the Urban Development and Construction budget of 69.7 billion to increase the amount put into schools and children's education. If the budget is unable to be tampered with, another possible solution would be to spend a portion of the Urban Development and Construction budget on educational institutions, thus creating some form of Capitation Grants similar to in Ghana.

There are several possible, feasible, and realistic solutions to improving the education system in Ethiopia. Improving the quality of education and increasing enrollment rates is to promote trade and technical education. Promoting enrollment in trade and technical institutions, allowing prospective students to learn marketable skills that will eventually advance their income, along with knowledge within the community. While trade schools are not traditionally considered a proper form of higher education, they are encompassed within the broad title of higher education and provide necessary life skills. Trained workers within trade careers such as mechanics, plumbing, welding, and electricians will contribute a positive impact on both the local and national economy. A downside to the promotion of trade careers is that technical institutions would only be provided to high school graduates, resulting in a limited applicant pool to select students from. Resources and materials would be needed to construct these buildings for technical education to take place. For true development in education to occur, the construction of trade schools would have to be throughout all of Ethiopia, not just in regional locations.

An additional solution to improving enrollment and literacy rates at the primary and secondary levels of education is to increase the number of schools in rural areas and provide them with adequate learning materials. By constructing schools in rural areas of the country where education is inaccessible to the local children, enrollment rates in the primary sector will realistically increase. Providing education materials such as textbooks, writing materials, and technology to the students will lead to a quality, well-rounded education. This would increase the number of learning opportunities and knowledge that students would have. However, it is difficult to access the correct amount of materials needed for each institution and increasingly difficult to distribute these learning materials to every school within the country. A final solution to improving the quality of education is to attempt to alter the culture that surrounds the ideals of education, especially in relation to women receiving both standard and higher levels of education. A realistic possibility of the outcomes of the solutions provided is the risk that these students obtaining an education would immigrate out of the country, otherwise known as human capital flight. With educated Ethiopians leaving the country, educational progress would take several steps back concerning both national statistics such as literacy rates and enrollment numbers. To resolve this possible outcome, those who have received an education would be rewarded by increasing job opportunities along with the salary rates to compensate for their education and experience. NGOs could also play a part in this incentive for educated citizens to remain in Ethiopia. Education-based NGOs such as the Center on Human Rights Education and CARE could use their resources to promote either the continuation of education past secondary schooling and/or what a person can truly do with this educational degree. There are currently NGOs residing within Ethiopia assisting the citizens, Early Childhood Education Ethiopia has begun building the first community preschool. This project will promote the right and accessibility to education from a young age, instilling in its citizens a path towards furthering their own education. If foreign aid were to come into the picture regarding the educational system within Ethiopia, volunteer aid would be the most successful. By making it aware on a worldwide scale of the state of Ethiopia's educational conditions and culture. The country would get recognition from either NGOs or organizational groups who would be able to dedicate their resources to the cause of improving Ethiopia's

education system. It is most important to create a culture shift through the use of accessibility to education. By shifting the expectations and mindset of citizens to believe that all citizens should receive higher levels of education, eventually, it will become standard practice to continue education past the primary level. By increasing pressure to continue attending school, more teachers, schools, and materials will be needed, which could lead to issues concerning the number of qualified educators needed to run educational programs throughout the country.

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