Global Development Final Paper

Kenya, since being established in 1963, has struggled to keep up with the developing world. It’s people are some of the poorest in the world, and most of the country has lived in poverty for generations. The country continues to struggle, and is making little progress in catching up with the rest of the world. Their people face agriculture issues, political unrest and disease to name just a few of the plethora of problems they have. Although many factors contribute to the extreme underdevelopment of Kenya, the corruption of government leaders is what perpetuates the high level of poverty and makes it impossible for development to take off.

In order to understand why Kenya is crippled by its leaders, one must know the extreme amount of poverty the country faces everyday. Kenya’s people have one of the shortest life expectancies in the world. In a 2005 report, it showed that Kenya ranked 155 out of 170 countries, this is due to the extreme lack of public services such as hospitals, as well as general access to health care. Without the government's help in setting up these types of services, Kenyans are left to suffer in terrible living conditions. In 2006, life expectancy dropped to the age of 44 due to an extreme HIV/Aids outbreak. This outbreak can be credited to a combination of lack in education and lack of healthcare. In developed countries, these services are setup and maintained by the government. However, in a country such as Kenya where the leaders have failed to provide services that are affordable and accessible, diseases can run rampant and wipe
out masses of people. In addition the people of Kenya are also some of the poorest, they have one of the lowest GDP/per capita in the world, and 46% of the population lives on less than 1 U.S. dollar a day. The lack of capital in the general population makes it almost impossible to set up any sort of industry that could help stabilize the economy. As long as Kenya has corrupt and ineffective leaders they have very little hope of improving many of the areas that keep the general population in extreme poverty. Kenya will never achieve real “development” until they are able to offer their citizens a better living experience. Sen talks about this in “The Concepts Of Development”, she says “But the nature of the life that people succeed in living in each period is also a matter of importance.”(Sen,15). This is the “development” that Kenya should be looking to achieve. By doing this they’ll be able to tackle poverty and give their people a fighting chance.

One of the main reasons that Kenya continues to be underdeveloped has to do with their extreme reliance on agriculture. Throughout the whole country agriculture employs 40% of the population(fao.org). When just looking at the rural population, agriculture employs more than 70% of the country(fao.org). While many people depend on this industry, it is extremely unreliable. The weather patterns in Kenya can be extremely unreliable which can lead to mass famine due to the heavy reliance on self producing crops. Not only is farming unstable, it is also going to be heavily affected by Kenya’s growing population. The population is growing at such a rate that land will be at such a premium, the agriculture market will take a major hit. It will soon be near impossible for farmers to have the land needed to harvest crops to feed the population. Once seeing all of these problems one might wonder why so many Kenyans rely on this very unstable market. The answer is because it is their only choice. There is practically no industry in Kenya due to the inability of the government to support its people. Whether it’s because of
corrupt leaders or just ignorance, the leaders of Kenya haven’t set up any alternative to agriculture that would allow the country to create some sort of reliable market. This forces the people to put all of their time in a market that could collapse and won’t allow for any economic gain. Without the people who are in control of Kenya dedicated to stimulating the economy, there will continue to be little development.

The level of corruption that exists is Kenya is some of the worst that you will find in the whole world. There are multiple examples of leaders and politicians taking bribes or keeping public money for themselves. President Uhuru Kenyatta and Raila Odinga are among the most corrupt leaders in Kenya, according to a report released by pulslive.co - a popular research company. They have a history of doing things that hinder the development of the country and hurt the people of Kenya. The President and his family have been linked to many scandals that involve the loss of public funds. His wife, the First Lady, was forced to cancel her “2017 Beyond Zero Marathon”, because of a company associated with the campaign pocketing millions of dollars. Uhuru’s uncle has also been linked to a major scandal involving the loss of public funds. He has been linked to a scandal in which over 9 Billion dollars of public funds have just been lost (pulselive.co). During his presidency it has been estimated that corruption has risen by 240% in the last 5 years (pulselive.co). The amount of political officials, and frequent scandals point to the widespread corruption that prohibits Kenya from growing in any way. By allowing these people to stay in power there is very little chance that any program can be created to help people. Whether it’s politicians taking money from the programs, or not passing it because it will affect their paycheck, public money ends up in the wrong hands.

A recent scandal is a perfect example of how hard it is for a program to get funded and passed in Kenya. Kenyan police recently arrested the head of a government youth
agency for the theft of over 78 million U.S. dollars (bbc.com). Over 50 people that were a part of this publicly funded program were arrested for funneling this money into private pockets. This program was originally meant for educating youth to help combat unemployment in that group. This is a perfect example, of how a group of corrupt leaders took away from a government program that could've been very beneficial to Kenya and its people. By educating the youth, you can help create industry and markets that could help stabilize some of Kenya’s economy. However, with these terrible leaders it is nearly impossible for people to better their lives and help develop this poverty ridden country.

One of the biggest reasons that Kenya needs to create a working democracy, is the idea that development is created by democracy. It has been said for a long time that creating a firm and fair government is the best way to achieve this idea of development. In a article written by Rodrik he says “Markets fail when participants engage in fraudulent or anticompetitive behavior. They fail when transaction costs prevent the internalizing of technological and other non pecuniary externalities.”(Rodrik,4). This helps to outline how badly a developing economy needs an institution to stop corruption and help regulate markets. This is created by having a successful democracy that is strong enough to stop people from committing fraud, and is fair enough to only put the country first. Another crucial part of development is allowing people to have property rights. In the same article Rodrik says “The establishment of secure and stable property rights have been a key element in the rise of the West and the onset of modern economic growth.”(Rodrik,3). This is one of the most important rights that a government must provide its people in order for development. In Kenya there is very little guarantee of property rights, or basic rights to belongings in general. This is one
of the major reasons that there is little industry, because there is no assurance that people will be able to control their land. This is just one of many basic necessities that the leaders of Kenya have failed to award their people.

Kenya has done a very bad job of electing leaders that want to further development in the country. They’ve had to battle fraud, corruption and just bad leadership in an effort to improve their country. As long as Kenya continues to have ineffective leaders, they’ll continue to have an extreme lack of industry and their people will continue to suffer in poverty.
Works Cited


