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Abstract:

The Earth is a very complex and interconnected system. Most people are blissfully unaware of how the world around them affects their lives and even decisions. Poverty in society is often regarded as disconnected, while some people are moved on a humanitarian level, most do not realize the implications poverty holds in their own lives. Despite common convention, poverty is a serious issue for the middle and upper classes. When left unchecked, poverty results in massive crime waves, transmission of diseases, substance abuse and in extreme cases national destabilization. It stands to reason that countries that reduce poverty and develop a middle class will experience social and economic prosperity, as evidenced by the development of most western nations. Countries that wish to eradicate poverty must start by ensuring fundamental necessities in order to defeat the poverty trap. Second only to oxygen, water is the most basic necessity to survive. In order to free the poor from a vicious cycle of unemployment, governments need to provide access to the clean drinking water, a necessity to maintain a healthy work force. Unfortunately most impoverished nations lack the infrastructure and are subject to corruption within the government. A multilateral approach must be chosen to address the various obstacles involved in providing a developing nation with drinkable water. In the case of Ethiopia, water scarcity and quality are crippling the economy and the people. The first step in providing Ethiopia with accessible drinking water is to address the corruption that goes on within the government. Corruption might be obvious on a national level, but the individuals who partake in it must conceal their actions. The best way to solve this dilemma on a national level is to bring it down to a personal level by establishing a department of transparency responsible for collecting complaints, generating statistics and exposing the individuals responsible for corruption to the public and media. Corruption might prevent a country form allocating resources to public health, but in the case of Ethiopia, the government and private sector lack the technical know-how and logistical capability to solve the nation’s water issues. Our solution to this water pandemic draws it’s inspiration from the Barefoot College. The Barefoot College is a school in India that trains African women in the field of solar engineering so that they may return and provide a valuable service while establishing a career for themselves. A school that trains Ethiopian citizens to become water sanitization engineers would allow the country to emerge from the poverty trap and establish a new job sector simultaneously. Governments, companies, and especially people, are reluctant to give their time and money to a cause that they do not stand to gain from, what most don’t realize, is that poverty costs society far more over the long run than it costs to eradicate. When viewed from a holistic perspective, fixing poverty becomes something we should do for ourselves, rather than a moral responsibility.

Intro:

"Thousands have lived without love, not one without water." (Wystan Hugh Auden). When someone is asked if they need anything they almost always think of things they want. This question is not meant to be literal, for if it was, the response would unequivocally be air, water, food and sleep. Wystan Auden makes use of literalism in an almost comical betrayal of societies expectation that love would be valued first and foremost above all other human “necessities”. This witticism was not intended to ridicule people’s craving for love and acceptance but rather to draw attention to basic human necessities that are nearly forgotten in first world society. In developed countries like America, we spend most of our lives in pursuit of our desires. In the span of a few generations the people of western nations have forgotten what it means to survive. Inhabitance of developed nations do not “survive”, they “ live” as technological innovation has allowed them to transcend prioritizing their biological needs. While having a lucrative career, a house with a white picket fence, and a two-child family are staples of American culture, they are not in fact needs. Without water, people quickly experiences compromised bodily function, culminating in death after approximately three days of unabated dehydration. In developing nations where people endure water scarcity and contamination, a day or two of dehydration renders citizens unable to function let alone work; without income, it becomes very difficult to obtain the sustenance necessary to stay in working condition. This series of unfortunate events is self-perpetuating, known as the Water Poverty Trap; this vicious cycle is in large part responsible for the high unemployment rate in Ethiopia, which has fluctuated between 18% and 26% in the last few decades. For comparison’s sake, the United State’s great depression ranged between 15% and 25% unemployment for a period of three years. In America, the Great Depression is considered to be one of the darkest times in the young nation’s history, and while for a brief period it experienced crippling unemployment, U.S. citizens still enjoyed an immensely higher quality of life due to their developed infrastructure than Ethiopian citizens experience to this day. The great depression was a product of mass panic and American economic policy with Europe; Ethiopia’s plight is a result of the poverty trap and is therefore far more detrimental. In the U.S, people could not find jobs during the depression, in Ethiopia people are not able to do the jobs necessary to stimulate the economy and sustain themselves and this is where the true source of their poverty lies.