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Sierra Leone: Improving Overall Good Health and Well-Being

In order to accomplish overarching goals of global health within low income countries, it is crucial to acknowledge the factors that contribute to the underdevelopment of health care within these countries. It is also important to understand the complexities required to initiate health facilities with quality, access, and effective cost methods in underdeveloped countries. From my research, I found that Sierra Leone is one particular country that faces political, societal, and economic issues that contribute substantially to the inadequate level of health care citizens receive. Health priorities are unobtainable as these issues are solely focused on, rather than an overall goal of good health and well-being within the country itself. The most prominent threats that Sierra Leone faces is the lack of quality education and the impact of environmental externalities on health, which prevents the country from reaching overall good health and well being by the year 2030. These risks guarantee setbacks for Sierra Leone as the country continues to struggle in maintaining an adequate amount of healthcare. Overall, Sierra Leone requires financial and medical support from various organizations and donors to improve health and create positive impacts towards the sustainable development goal three of good health and well being.

Sierra Leone lacks quality education as the majority of citizens are encouraged to start working around ages twelve to fourteen; thus, they no longer are able to further their education after secondary school. Based on evidence in other countries, it can be determined that quality

education leads to more accurate health knowledge, better lifestyle choices, and a strengthened understanding on the importance of quality healthcare (Nutbeam, 2000). In order to address this major issue, I believe that teacher training programs should be initiated to ensure that students are receiving quality teaching and learning which would encourage them to want to further their education altogether. Within Sierra Leone, teachers are only required to earn a twenty-five percent teaching score on their teaching certificate, which sets extremely subpar standards for the quality of the education system (Bernal, 2021). With financial support from experts, the government would be able to assist school systems initiate higher quality teaching programs and strengthen the requirements necessary to earn teaching credentials in Sierra Leone. It is essential that the nation advocates for existing teachers across the region to teach to their full potential, in order to encourage educators to put forth maximum effort towards the student's education.

A research study was recently conducted within Sub-Saharan Africa to prove whether improving education could decrease the level of poverty and corruption within the country. While prioritizing healthcare is a major concern for Sub-Saharan Africa, the government perceived a need to focus on other options, such as investing in quality education in an effort to foresee changes in their healthcare system (Pew Research Center, 2015). The study indicated that the higher level of education a country receives can depict the health care standards people are subject to. For example, Kenya was found to have increased their education level across the country from twenty to twenty-three percent within three years. This resulted in an increased level of health care by six percent and a reduction in corruption by eight percent. However in Senegal, the education level remained consistent at only fourteen percent with no change in either the level of health care or reduction in corruption (Pew Research Center, 2015).

Altogether, this further proves the necessity for quality education as there is a direct correlation between schooling and health care systems within a country.

Within Sierra Leone, medical facilities are exceedingly rare and continuously declining across the country as well. This is solely due to the political standpoints of leaders within local governments that create obstacles for the country to progress further. While foundations provide fundraising for health care in Sierra Leone, the majority of government officials feel the money can be utilized elsewhere as they believe the number of deaths and disabilities are uncontrollable at this point. As a result, many global health actors distrust the government and provide fewer health services in Sierra Leone, as they recognize that fundings are not being prioritized for good health and well being. In order to address this issue and focus on achieving SDG three, Sierra Leone should further focus on improving SDG four of quality education for the government to improve their understanding on the importance of quality health care. (Nutbeam, 2000). I believe that if the government were to split fundings and put half towards quality education and the other half towards improving health care, there would be significant improvements in the overall quality of care. If there are advancements made towards increasing the quality of education and teaching people information on preventative measures and ways to improve their lifestyles, a significant decrease in the number of deaths and disabilities would follow (Burgess, 2015).

From my research, it can be determined that other countries struggling to improve their quality of care, have increased the level of education to create more efficient health care for citizens. For example, malaria is one of the leading causes of death in Sierra Leone, exclusively due to the lack of education and understanding of the disease itself. In Liberia, global health actors, such as Partners in Health, utilized citizens that received quality education to help decrease the number of malaria cases and further teach them how to handle treating patients on

their own. Due to this, malaria has diminished by forty-seven percent for children under five within Liberia, and is continuously declining as the quality of education continues to increase as well (CDC, 2018). This became cost effective for both the organization and the government as citizens were able to better understand how to provide health care for others in their day-to-day lives. I believe this would also help create a positive relationship where global health actors feel they can better trust the government and provide adequate services nationwide, as it would be recognized that the government wants to create changes in their health care system.

The country of Sierra Leone is known to be geographically challenged as the country consists of swamps, plateaus, and mountains throughout the terrain. The country is also infamous for its moist and above average humid climate throughout the year. Both factors contribute greatly to the poor quality of life that people endure due to lack of access to medical resources to enhance the quality of environmental health. For example, the climate within the country significantly increases the number of mosquitos, which raises the number of malaria cases as mosquitos are the primary vessel of transmission for this disease (Burgess, 2015). This issue can be addressed by increasing SDG four within Sierra Leone and teaching people ways to prevent such diseases through new techniques and resources. In addition to this idea, increasing the level of education within the country will allow citizens to advocate for and recognize the resources needed to improve environmental health altogether.

In Afghanistan, the government could not configure methods or viable treatments to control the spread of malaria within the country. In an attempt to find a solution, the government provided educational funding for doctors or citizens with adequate education to take it upon themselves to complete more schooling within other countries to further understand mechanisms on how to control this disease. One widely used method to help control this disease was by

utilizing mosquito bed nets and clothing that covers the majority of exposed skin when sleeping to protect themselves from bug bites. Subsequently, Afghanistan would go on to implement similar methods within their own nation (CDC, 2018). This led to a slight decrease in the resulting number of malaria cases as the government provided funding for these resources for the vast majority of the country. Because there is a standard of quality education within Afghanistan, doctors and citizens learned that unprotected, poor quality water was associated with increased malaria rates as mosquitoes tend to breed in pools of stagnant water. Advanced technology, such as solar water disinfection and ceramic filtration systems, was then allocated and contributed to a decrease in malaria cases as well (Cameron, 2021). With proper education and funding programs for Sierra Leone, a higher quality of environmental health and a progression towards SDG three can be achieved.

With financial support, the country itself can also work on improving SDG six of clean water and sanitation to further reach the goal of SDG three. Funding provided to Sierra Leone can be used to incorporate the World Health Organization (WHO) in the country as this multilateral organization has been known to focus on environmental well-being and truly prioritize improving global health (United States Environmental Protection Agency, 2022). Knowing the abilities of the WHO, I would recommend this institution allocates monetary assistance that can effectively provide Sierra Leone with access to quality water, such as filtration systems and implementations to properly dispose of waste. The institution can also research household air pollution and suggest alternatives that use less polluting fuels in order to reduce the burden of disease within the country as well. Focusing on SDG six will help Sierra Leone to have adequate sanitation and hygiene, while also progressing further towards the goal of overall good health and well being.

The World Health Organization is best suited to work on environmental health in the country as they have prioritized raising awareness for indoor air quality correlated with health. For example, within Sub Saharan Africa, the WHO observed the effect that indoor cooking had on upper respiratory infections and cardiovascular diseases. Contemplating their observations, the WHO worked to reduce the levels of emissions within households by providing countries with new stoves that use cleaner fuels as opposed to solid fuel. While analyzing the costs and benefits of this idea, the WHO learned that by adopting this intervention, a reduction in household air pollution will be progressively achieved over time. As a result of this project, upper respiratory infections decreased by twelve percent and cardiovascular diseases decreased by eight percent (Cameron, 2021). In conclusion, the World Health Organization can genuinely mitigate the burden of disease in Sierra Leone by means of implementing ideas, integrating projects, and providing additional funding as well.

Global health aims to improve health for all nations by promoting wellness while attempting to diminish the levels of disease, disability, and death. Sierra Leone continues to have a leading global death rate and as a result, the issues of quality education and improving environmental health must be addressed in order to see a change in the overall health status. Increasing the standards for teachers in schools and teaching citizens ways to better care for themselves, are both great starts to seeing a change in the level of quality education. The level of education directly correlates with improving environmental health as well as seen within the Afghanistan study that proved citizens were able to better advocate for their health needs. Furthermore, if the county were to collaborate with organizations such as WHO, there would be a significant increase in the quality of environmental health achieved as well. Overall, Sierra

Leone should be prioritized to receive financial support and resourceful improvements in order to achieve a status of overall good health and well being by the year 2030.

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