General Overview Of Kenya: Analytical Essay

Kenya is a developing country located on the eastern coast of Africa with over 500 kilometres of coastline to the Indian ocean (Figure 1). The population in 2017 was 48.7 million but today is over 52 million, with approximately 5 million living in the countries capital Nairobi (Figure 2). The rest of the population lives in other small cities, rural areas or slums (see below ‘Average Annual Income’)

The main religion in Kenya is Christianity (including all denominations) which is practiced by more than 80% of the population (Cultural Atlas, 2019). This religion was introduced to the country when missionaries settled nearby. Other religions practiced in Kenya include Islam, Traditional African religions or Atheist.

Only 2% of Kenya’s total area of 580,367km2 is covered in water (Figure 3). The Equator runs through Kenya, this makes a mainly arid and dry climate until the wet season when torrential rain causes floods, most devastatingly, in rural farming lands.

Currency

The currency in Kenya is the Kenyan Shilling (Figure 4). One AUD is equivalent to 69.82 KES. In Kenya, 6982.40 KES is equivalent to $100 AUD (Xe.com, 2019). With this amount of money, you could purchase: 1 pair of jeans, a three-course meal for two at a mid-range restaurant and 15 litres of milk (Living, 2019). The Kenyan economy has been steadily growing since independence was gained in 1963.

Governance

Kenya has been a democratic republic with a president as head of state. The current President of Kenya is Uhuru Kenyatta who has been president since 2013. He is the son of the first President Jomo Kenyatta and has been re-elected for a second term.

After violence occurred between different ethnic groups, it was recognised that the constitution needed to be amended (BBC News, 2019). In 2010, a referendum was held over the adoption of a new constitution that hadn’t been renewed since 1963 when Kenya became independent from their colonialists (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2019). The referendum was successful with 67% of Kenyan voters in favour of a renewed constitution and was adopted and changes were made towards the end of 2010.

GDP

The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Kenya in 2017 was 74.94 billion USD, $1500 per capita. Kenya is ranked 101st in the world and 25th in Africa for the highest GDP.

The main and most profitable exports produced by Kenya that make up their GDP in 2017 were tea (bringing in over $1 billion), flowers ($600 million) and refined petroleum (almost $300

million). The main countries that this produce is exported to is the USA, Pakistan and Uganda (Oec.world, 2019).

Development Indicators

Child Mortality Rates (0-5)

The current morality rates in Kenya is 41 deaths per every 1000 live births (UNICEF DATA, 2019). In the 1950's, the rate was almost one third of infants died (304 deaths per 1000 live births). Between the 50's and 80's the rate reduced by 200 (Anon, 2019). In the 90's the rate began to rise again by approximately 20 deaths to 119 per 1000 (Figure 5). This may have been the result of an outbreak of HIV/AIDS in Kenya at this time (Hill et al., 2019). It was controlled and the child mortality rate began to drop into the 2000's and today the rate is 41 per 1000 which is a great improvement (Avert, 2019).

Kenya's death rate of children under 5 is vastly different to Australia. Kenya's is currently 41 per 1000 live births whereas Australia is just 3.3 per 1000 (Abs.gov.au, 2019). This is due to Australia being a developed country with advanced infrastructure and facilities that can keep disease and other factors contributing to these deaths to a minimum.

Life Expectancy

Life Expectancy at birth in Kenya is currently 62.13 years, which makes Kenya the 164th ranked country in the world (Populationpyramid.net, 2019). Australia is the 10th ranked country in the world with a current life expectancy at birth of 82.45 years, 20 years over Kenya.

More children are surviving into adulthood and life expectancy is increasing as they are expected to live longer due to advancements in medical facilities and care. This means the population will be increasing and ageing, which may come with its own problems into the future.

The birth rate in Kenya has fallen significantly since the 1960's where the average woman would have 8 children to now having an average of 3.85 (Google.com, 2019). Although there has been a large decrease, this number is significantly more than the 2016 birth rate in Australia which is 1.81.

Population Using Piped Water

The Kenyan Government has made progress since 2000 in providing access to drinking water. However, progress has been slow, with only 32% of the population having access to piped water by 2014 (Figure 6). Since then, the percentage has reduced slightly with population increasing faster that water infrastructure can be constructed. In a report earlier this year, it was found that there are still over 20 million people who don't have access to any kind of safe or clean water (Water.org, 2019).

In areas such as the slums and the rural areas, access to water is even more difficult and residents find any water they can to collect water from lakes, creeks and puddles. This water is not clean and often carries disease.

Prevalence of Undernourishment

Since 2000, the percentage of the Kenyan population to be undernourished had dropped from 33% to 23%, in 13 years. In 2014, the percentage started to quickly climb and in 2017 was back up to approximately 29% (Knoema, 2019) (Figure 7). In Australia, the undernourishment percentage is one tenth of Kenya at 2.5% in 2015 (Tradingeconomics.com, 2019).

The main cause of this sudden surge of undernourishment in Kenya in recent years could be due to droughts and overall lack of food due to agricultural difficulties in rural towns. Undernourishment can be deadly to young children in these slum and rural areas as they are at a greater risk of getting a disease while their immune system is low (ReliefWeb, 2019).

Average Annual Income

The average annual income in Kenya is 727,001.400 KES or about 10,000 AUD. Australia's average annual income is 65 000 AUD. This clearly shows the economic difference between the two countries.

In 2018, 13.2% of people living in Australia were below the poverty line (Acoss.org.au, 2019). Kenya has improved significantly since 2005 with its percentage of Kenyan's living in poverty has reduced by 22% in 10 years (Knoema, 2019). However, the 2015 percentage of people living under the poverty line in Kenya was still 36%. There are still thousands of people living in poor areas such as slums (Figure 8) and in rural areas (Figure 9) where there is less work and lower pair work for people to have.

Aid

Not for profit organisations such as The Water Project have been set up specifically for helping with water supplies in Africa. They do this by installing wells and pumps to be used in struggling rural communities. UNICEF and Save the Children are also currently working to supply clean water, medical professionals and food to these communities. Donations from people in developed countries to these charities would help them to continue their work helping Kenyan communities to reduce the spread and birth of many preventable diseases and provide medical attention to those in critical conditions.

Over a wide range of measures, living standards in Kenya are improving. But compared to a developed country like Australia, there is a long way to go. The continued support from other developed countries and donations can help Kenya to continue in its current positive direction to help and improve the quality of life for some residents who are lacking resources. The main areas in need of improvement are healthcare, readily available clean water and sanitation for all living in Kenya. Their current democratically elected government needs to ensure these issues continue to be their top priorities in the future. This will reduce the risk of any possible future health disasters and improve the environments in which the population of Kenya live.

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