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## The Effects of Hunger and Poverty Due to Poor Governance

As the population of the world is growing, the rise in the world's malnourished is increasing at an astounding rate due to poverty and poor governance that is conflicting with advances in agriculture which must be obtained in order to stay at pace with the undernourished population. It is estimated that at a medium fertility rate the world's population will be around 8.3 billion people and that an additional one billion tons of grain will be needed, according to Norman Borlaug in an American Institute of Biological Sciences interview in 2002. It is therefore highly important, and essential that new sciences and technologies along with governmental cooperation are developed and put into effect to increase agricultural production. The necessity of research into small-scale technologies, such as water harvesting, and into new crop varieties must be made known and available to both large and small scale farmers. Poor governance is one of the greatest factors that hinder this development in agricultural production. Due to internal conflicts, farmers and their families in a country that is experiencing mismanagement by its government are caused to be displaced, leaving land that may be used to grow food go to waste in a country that is already plagued by poverty and hunger. The situations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) are a perfect example of how an unstable government is a major problem in the reduction of poverty and the undernourished. Nearly 80 percent of the population is trapped in extreme poverty. Food insecurity and undernourishment affect more than 70 percent of households. Over several years of conflict, there have been over 4 million lives lost due to violence, disease, and malnutrition, with an additional one thousand two hundred dying every day (Bauer). These numbers could have been lessened extremely if there was an initiative by the government to do so. With reforms that would help small-scale farmers develop their land and increase agricultural production, increase the education in the country, lessen the gender gap, and provide insights into development of the country and solutions towards internal conflicts, the impact of hunger and poverty could decrease dramatically and pave a road for long term relief.

Three years later, after the Democratic Republic of the Congo plunged into a second war in 1998, the nation is still entangled in a complex conflict that has had an unprecedented effect on the Congolese people. This deepening humanitarian crisis has resulted in the death and suffering of millions of people. After an assassination of the former president in January of 2001, his son Joseph pursued his father's footsteps, and created a new government that opened up the DRC to the outside world. This exposure has allowed for progress towards humanitarian support. It has shown willingness to implementation the provisions contained in the 1999 Lusaka Peace Accords, and adapted to a series of economic measures without any contributing social support. Although there has been much progress, there are still numerous problems in the society. The humanitarian crisis in the DRC is one of the worst in the world. The fighting that has occurred has led to hunger, disease, several inequalities, and a haunting number of deaths. Millions of people are displaced. The infrastructure of the states is crumbling in health and other sectors. Poverty is increasing in at a shocking rate. More than one third of the population has critical food needs. These are just a few of the horrendous consequences of this war (Oxfam).

Poverty falls drastically when growth occurs in places where the political situation is stable, corruption is rare, and farm productivity, along with literacy rates are high. These are traits of a good government. A good government gives rights to its constituents, and listens to those constituents. Advocates of a "rights-based" approach to development believe that good governance must also include support for essential human rights. This includes the right to food. The Democratic Republic of the Congo is politically unstable. Countries where food security deteriorated had the weakest rule of law and

the most corruptors. The government of the DRC is not powerful enough to preserve peace. This is a serious disruption of agricultural production. The uncontrolled militia raid, pillages, and plunder the resources that are so scarce in this nation. The per capita food production in Africa during a time of conflict has dropped an average of 12.4 percent. The weak rule of law exercised in the DRC has also eroded agricultural production and food security because it makes land tenure and contracts unattractive, and few people want to be involved in farming. The lack of roads, electricity, and communication lines make it difficult for farmers to get their products to market and obtain fertilizer and other agricultural inputs such as seeds. The government has little power over the nation when it comes to agriculture. For example, in 1990 the DRC contributed to 30 percent of the gross domestic product, and coffee was the second most important export earning about \$252 million, yet by 1998, this number was down to \$100 million. The government was aware, yet made no attempt to stop countries such as Rwanda and Uganda from smuggling the coffee out of the DRC. Even though 80 percent of the people in the DRC are experiencing food insecurities, the government investment in agriculture and agricultural research is not nearly proportional to the sector's importance to the national well-being of the people (Undernourishment around the World: The Role).

Malnutrition and contamination can have serious consequences. Many of these consequences are developed even before birth. Women need excess nourishment when they are pregnant so they can support both themselves, and their unborn child. Each year about 30 million infants are born in developing countries with weakened growth due to poor nutrition in the womb. Those low birth weight infants that survive being born too small are likely to remain underweight and sickly throughout their life. Children's performances are impaired not only in school, yet in everyday activities as well. Low birth weight, anemia, and iodine deficiency all impair cognitive abilities, and reduce children's abilities to learn throughout their life due to malnutrition and hunger. Sometimes hunger may be satisfied with food, yet food contamination is another serious obstacle that must be tackled to achieve nutritional well-being. Children are very prone to food-borne diseases, which rob them of crucial nutrients through diarrhea. In order to fight the war against malnourishment, we must not only look at food quantity, yet also at food quality (What Are Hunger and Malnutrition).

In a country where two thirds of the population is supported by agriculture, rural instability has led way to an almost total breakdown of the food security situation (Bauer). The DRC has the ability to farm coffee, sugar, palm oil, tea, quinine, cassava, bananas, root crops, corn, fruit, and many other foods, yet the current economical condition hinders them from exporting any goods, or producing enough for themselves. The Democratic Republic of the Congo has the potential to feed most of Africa where a majority of the world's hungry live, yet it is estimated that only one to two percent of the country's farmable territory has been under cultivation. However, in order for this to happen the government would have to develop numerous policies in order for the reversal of hunger to occur. The insecurity of access to fields, especially to women, has caused agriculture to suffer tremendously in the DRC. Due to the conflicts that are occurring in the nation, farmers are caused to leave their homes and dislocate (Washingtonpost). The fields are a common place for soldiers to come, making farmers and their families leave. Soldiers then continue to wreck havoc upon the fields that can save lives. For example, three villages in Nziriba were reportedly attacked by militias where two women were kidnapped, and peasants' cattle seized. These militia attacks against peasant farmers intensified to discourage them from testifying to humanitarian delegation on the terrible acts committed by the uncontrolled militias (World Food Programme). One million, seven hundred thousand people remain displaced and an additional 1.7 million are recently returning and trying to re-establish their homes and livelihoods (Bauer). The lack of roads greatly contributes towards declines in commercialism, and distribution of local production. "We must have good transport infrastructure. Even today, we've got people who produce food and it's thrown away because they can't get it to the market area," says president Kabila (Washingtonpost). If this fact is well known, why has there not been any improvements made? Of 145,000 km of roads, no more than 2,500 km are asphalt (Oxfam). Undernourishment itself is a deterrent towards the better production of

agriculture. Lack of food causes people to become weak and become incapable of doing work such as farming. Malnutrition and disease are an effect of lack of food production, yet lack of food production is also an effect of malnutrition and disease. Lack of education also causes a decline in productivity. People with a proper education are more likely to try to become more productive and make a difference. They believe that they can create an impact, and know that the production of food is beneficial to life. Another hindrance of agricultural productivity in the DRC is that women do not have equal rights. In many traditions women are not allowed to own land or receive an education. If the government was to empower women to contribute towards agricultural advancements, there could be a significant decline in world hunger.

An increase in education is an indispensable factor that will contribute towards a decrease in undernourishment of children, and give an education that will be used to better understand steps that can be taken to help eliminate poverty and hunger. Low productivity, employability, and earning capacity lead directly towards poverty and hunger, yet this effect can be lessened with an education. Research shows that in rural areas where the vast majority of the world's hungry people live a farmer with four years of primary education is nine percent more productive than a farmer with no education. When this is combined with the knowledge and availability of fertilizers, new seeds, and farm machinery, the productivity rises to thirteen percent. This increase of productivity is essential to receive more "crop per drop," and more "dollars per crop." However, lack of food, poverty, and health often discourage families to send their children to school. They often cannot afford to pay school fees and depend on children, especially girls, for tasks such as fetching water, and firewood. The Millennium Development Goals (MDG) have set the target of ensuring that every child in the world receives a primary education by 2025, yet progress has been very slow due to uneven aid and enforcement. One hundred and twenty one million children, two thirds of which are girls, remain out of schools. Most live in rural areas where hunger and poverty are most widespread. The rate at which out of school children are being enrolled in schools would have to quadruple in order to reach the MDG's target of universal education. Fewer than half of the countries in the sub-Saharan region will reach this target if enrollments continue at the current pace. Hunger and malnourishment are the daunting roots for the reason that the drive for universal primary education has lagged behind (Towards the Summit Commitments: Education).

United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan has called educating and empowering women "the greatest weapon in the war against poverty." When women are able to work and earn on an equal footing, the entire family benefits. Unlike men who use at least 25 percent of their income for purposes other than the household, women commonly use almost all of their income to meet household needs. According to a World Bank study in Guatemala, it takes fifteen times as much spending to reduce child malnutrition when income is earned by the father rather than the mother. Women and girls have been prevented from attending schools, holding jobs, or accessing resources and services that would allow them to improve their family's livelihoods due to cultural and legal obstacles. In many countries, women are barred by tradition or law from owning land. This greatly deters the advancement in agricultural production because women are not encouraged to consider occupations such as farming. For example, although at least 70 percent of the female labor force on the Indian subcontinent is engaged in food production, fewer than 20 percent of women farmers in India or Nepal own land. Without secure land tenure, women often cannot obtain the credit they would need to make improvements such as irrigation and drainage system that would increase productivity and maintain the fertility of the soil. In sub-Saharan Africa women farmers receive only 10 percent of loans granted to small holders, and less than one percent of the total credit advanced to the agricultural sector, although the number of women and men farmers is roughly equal. The households of these women farmers are the hardest hit by malnutrition and food insecurity. The inequality of education among women, compared to men is a contributing factor that prevents women from making advancements to agricultural production. During 1970 to 1995, the single largest contribution to declines in malnutrition was due to the gains in women's education, which accounted for 43 percent of the total progress in a recent study of 63 countries. Educated women have been known to

have healthier families. Their children are better nourished, less likely to die in infancy, and more likely to attend school. Women produce much of the world's food, yet lack of access to the fundamental tools of food production such as land, credit, training, education, and decision making power dissuades them from making agricultural advances that could save millions of lives (Towards the Summit Commitments: Gender Equality).

The prevalence of undernourishment has been slowly decreasing, yet in order to reach the MDG's target, sub-Saharan Africa will need to step up their attempts towards fighting hunger. The DRC is among few in this area that are actually increasing the number of undernourished, which is mostly due to poor governance (What Are Hunger and Malnutrition). The government needs to not only look at the economic sector to reduce hunger but also at the agricultural sector. The economic sector may give short term relief towards the war against hunger, yet an increase in the agricultural area would set down guidelines that will be used for years to come. Urban and industrial growth does little to help reduce the presence of malnutrition, in fact, it only worsens it. In order to truly create an impact, we must get to the root of the problem, which is that there is not enough food. Agricultural research needs to be applied so that the DRC can reach its production potential. Studies have shown that growth in rural areas and in the agricultural sector had a much greater impact on reducing hunger and poverty than did urban and industrial growth (Undernourishment Around The World: Economic). One strategy at rural development was presented by the World Bank, which would increase the percentage of resources devoted to rural development. It calls for the bank to invest in the whole rural economy, not just agriculture, and depends on target states providing an environment in which agriculture is not overtaxed, and has sufficient priority in development (World Food Summit). Another way to reduce hunger is to direct schools to provide mandatory lunches. Both nutrition and school attendance would improve. This system has had dramatic effects in India, especially for girls (Undernourishment around the World: The Role). Given the scale of the hunger crisis in The DRC, every little contribution and attempt will help.

Action must be taken to increase agricultural research so that food production can keep pace with the world's growing population. The impact of poor governance in such countries like the Democratic Republic of the Congo has been a terrible hindrance towards this advancement. The continent of Africa is at serious risk of falling into more poverty and increasing the number of people that are suffering from undernourishment. The DRC has the potential to produce enough food to greatly offset the effects of hunger, yet due to the poor state of the government in this country, no changes have been made. The DRC is using only one to two percent of its cultivatable land, letting the rest of it go to waste while its people are starving. The uncontrolled militia have wreaked havoc upon rural development and caused millions of people to dislocate, leaving their farms behind and food to be wasted in a starving nation. Most of the population lives on less than one U.S. dollar of food per day. Some people can't even eat but every three days. By promoting universal primary education, this nation could become more aware of the crisis which they are experiencing, learn more about ways to prevent it, and work towards advancement in the agricultural sector. By encouraging women to contribute towards agricultural production, the DRC could see a significant improvement in the stability of not only the agricultural sector, yet of the entire nation. Internally, this nation has improved compared to earlier years when it was completely shut down to the world. However, the DRC is one of the few countries in Africa that are actually regressing back into poverty rather than progressing to prevent it. There are several initiatives that could be taken to stimulate the government to help reduce government. Such initiatives are rural development in order to prompt farmers to look into new crop varieties that can produce better yield and promote them to cultivate more land, and to establish universal primary education along with a mandatory school lunch program. The crisis that the DRC is experiencing is one of the worst in the world, and has seen little improvement. Yet with help from such organizations as the World Food Programme, and the World Bank, along with governmental cooperation, this goal of the elimination of undernourishment around the world is within reach.



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