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India: Understanding the Majority

India is widely known as the most populous democracy in the world. The population is currently at 1.2 billion people, representing 17% of the world's population. It continues to grow at a rate of 1.41% per year as the natural resources become more depleted annually (Poverty, 2). Over the past decade, the Indian economy has rebounded, but the amount of hungry citizens persists. Democracy is a positive system, but only brings about positive effects if the entire population is able to receive the benefits of majority of the rule. India needs to take advantage of the poverty-stricken people in her country- they represent the majority, and therefore, have the most to say. According to the World Bank, India is ranked second in childhood malnutrition. 47% of the children suffer from lack of food as a result of extreme poverty. As India's Prime Minister, Manmoham Singh, noted, this is considered "a national shame" (Sengupta, Indian). Malnutrition leads to a weakened immune system, which then leads to a high risk of diseases such as typhoid, malaria and pneumonia (Pada, 1). By promoting awareness of the risks of malnutrition and creating public policy initiatives to promote the need for a cure, fewer children should die everyday due to lack of food.

In India, the average family consists of six people, in which not all of the members of the family are blood relatives. Joint families are common, and a wife is expected to share a household with her husband's friends and co-workers (Family, 1). This allows for more agricultural career opportunities because the more in a group, the more work that can be done. Families living on farms or desert terrain have limited access to meats, and therefore tend to lean towards natural foods such as vegetables, rice, and fresh fruits. In the communities with close proximity to water, seafood is also a common source of subsistence.

Within the past decade, the amount of children enrolled in school has increased significantly; however, 25% of the entire country is still illiterate. Only 7% of kids graduate from high school, and the amount of children enrolled in secondary school is very low (Poverty, 2). An average family puts its children through school up until high school, and then the children take their place in the work force helping to make a living for his family. The universal health care system is run by the states, and is expanding every year, causing a decline in the infant mortality rate. However, due to the size of the country, and the lack of infrastructure in the healthcare system, there are not enough public health care facilities to meet the needs of the people.

India is the world's largest exporter of fresh fruit. Other notable crops include rice, saffron and wheat. The Green Revolution brought amazing developments to India's agriculture industry but the new and updated practices never reach their full potential (Organic, 2). The country continues to grow in population, and does not provide enough food for its pupils. An average farm family runs the rain-fed plot, and barely makes enough profit to keep the area alive and plentiful. Within the past few years, families are finding it more profitable to sell their land instead of producing crops.

The Green Revolution brought industrialized farming techniques to the country, but they were never utilized in the proper way. Farmers tend to use organic pesticides and insecticides because they cannot afford the commercial products. Modern irrigation programs were introduced, but a few years later, the government stopped funding such projects. The size and quantities of family farms has significantly dropped within the past few years. Families that produce fresh fruit, do not have the money to allow refrigerated trucks to transport the crops to the town supermarkets (World Bank).

The recent changes in temperature are also affecting the agricultural industry in India. Summers are becoming hotter, causing more droughts and creating more need for a successful irrigation system. The drops in temperature overnight are damaging crops on small farms that do not have the funds to appropriately plan for such events (Organic, 2). The severe drop in agricultural output is leading to the increase in malnutrition across the country. To feed its 1.2 billion people, the country needs to output enough rice and wheat which it cannot do in its current state. Adequate nutrition is just not possible with the amount of factors causing the agricultural industry to become weaker than ever before.

Population and hunger coexist very easily, because one so heavily relies on the other. In order to reduce the amount of malnutrition in a country, enough food needs to be produced to feed the amount of people residing in the nation. India's vast size and population numbers continue to increase each year, while the food output stays the same- or possibly decreases. Population increases are severely impacting agricultural productivity. As time pushes forward, more fertile land is being tarnished by weather, people or government-based projects (Environmental, 1). Fertile land must be utilized immediately in order to achieve the most abundant, positive results.

India lacks proper storage for their crops which also leads to a lack of food. After these families cultivate their fruit, rice and wheat, they need to find ways to transport these items to facilities that can arrange to sell them for profit. However, these poverty-stricken families lack the funds to order refrigerated trucks and refrigerated bins to keep the fruit from spoiling. In the summer heat, there is only a short amount of time that specific foods can remain without proper storage before they become inedible. This lack of storage facilities also causes the amount of people with adequate nutrition to decrease (Organic, 2). Products such as milk, eggs, and some fruits and vegetables require refrigeration that small, rural farmers just do not have; therefore, their diets do not consist of these important dietary food groups that they may need in order to stay healthy.

This current population issue is becoming worse as years continue. India's economy has significantly increased in a positive direction within the past decade as a result of free market initiatives passing in 1991. After becoming independent from socialist rule, democratic government applied the use of free market to a very positive effect. However, despite the growth economically, India continues to face a high unemployment rate, and vast numbers of children with malnutrition.

Since the population in India continues to increase, the situation will continue to get worse until the government steps in to attempt to stop it. Small families and farmers do not have the opportunities or financial capabilities to increase their annual profit. Public policy initiatives and education about the topic of malnutrition children and adults need to be implemented in order to gain awareness of the severity of this issue. In order to improve the situation, enough food needs to be produced at reasonable prices to feed all the people residing in India. By increasing the amount of crops, the lower the prices of this food should be. This allows for a wider variety of citizens to obtain the food that they need to feed their families, including their children.

According to the Land Area under Organic Management survey, only .03% of India's land is specified for use as organic farms (Organic, 3). This small percentage of usable farming soil allows for fewer families to set up and run an organic, affordable farm, which in turn, leads to slower outputs in crops. This survey also leads us to believe that the rest of the land is being used for commercial buildings and institutions, which is lessening the quality of the air and terrain in the country.

Increasing the number of farms also can help decrease the unemployment rate. India's unemployment rate is approximately at 10.1%. This is causing extreme poverty, and many families will go without food for days at a time; perhaps weeks without clean water. Increasing the amount of farms will then require more people to work for minimum wage. Continuing the cycle, these families will then have the money to

purchase enough food to keep their family alive and healthy. Unemployment rate, agriculture, and poverty all coincide in multiple ways to create the gross malnutrition India owns.

Since the need for farming and an increase in crop output is so important, pollution needs to be kept to a minimum in India. Because of the influx of residents in the country, more natural resources are being depleted as humans make more room for people. Deforestation and urbanization are causing the amount of trees in the country to decrease significantly. As a result of rapid industrialization within the past few years, fertile land for farming is becoming harder to find adding to the problem of food shortages.

Climate is also affecting the food security in India. Recently, the weather in this country is becoming more unpredictable by the day and causing farmers to lose crops. India is divided into three sub-regions: Deccan Plateau, the Himalayan Mountain System and the Northern Plains. Each region has its own climate, so as one travels through the country of India, temperature and terrain changes significantly. Poverty-stricken farmers also do not have the proper equipment to prepare for vast changes in temperature so if the weather becomes unexpectedly cold, many crops will die. This type of natural issue also contributes to the country's overall poverty and malnutrition.

Contrary to popular belief, some areas of India actually have the means to reduce their amounts of children who are malnourished. In Mumbai, which is India's financial center, there are numerous opportunities for work in factories and farms that could supply income for a man's family. Malnutrition is not the only factor leading to the high child mortality rate in this country. Impoverished families do not have the money to buy food, but they also do not have the means to take their kids to doctors when they fall ill (Poverty, 5). The lack of adequate nutrition also leads to more diseases that could potentially be fatal.

India is a democracy, which pertains to the rule of the majority. The Indian middle class consists of 50 million people, which is the majority in this nation. To try to correct the problem of hungry children, the government needs to educate the public about the severity of this issue and promote public service programs to try and feed as much of the country as possible. Programs that already exist include the Mid-Day Meal Scheme, National Children's Fund, and the Integrated Child Development Scheme (World Bank). These programs are attempting to supply government aid to organizations whose goal is to feed more children. The Mid-Day Meal Scheme is a government-issued program that supplies a meal to all children attending public school. The problem is these kids have to be at school in order to receive the benefits of this program. Since only 35% of the children in urban areas go to school, only 35% of children will receive the benefits of this public policy (Sengupta, Indian).

The effects of malnutrition last a lifetime, if they do not cause death. The most important time for a child when it comes to growth is between birth and 2 years. This is when their bones develop and they learn important motor skills. If they are not given proper nutrition, these skills cannot develop properly leading to retardation, or other severe mental problems. Children also need representation of all the food groups in their diet in order to help their immune system fight off diseases. Without all the proper food groups, small children have a higher risk of diarrhea, pneumonia, typhoid, and malaria (Healthcare, 2).

Another way to attack the problem of malnutrition is to find better ways of storing the natural crops that small families in rural areas already have. Foods such as fruits and vegetables cannot last long in the unpredictable climate, and the food eventually spoils. In order to preserve more food, and to allow for better stocking, the government should allow more resources to become available to store and handle fresh food. Genetically modified crops may be another, more innovative way to gain a higher crop yield. By genetically changing the crops that are grown on small and large farms, farmers may then be able to produce double, possibly triple the amount they were producing normally. The local and national governments could play a part in setting up these research opportunities.

Some parts of India are actually over-nourished, meaning they have more than enough food to account for their daily caloric intake (Malnutrition, 3). This over nutrition also causes problems with health, including obesity and diabetes. These people have these diseases due to lack of physical activity, not eating a balanced diet and high amounts of stress. In the places and cities where economic growth seemed the most prevalent, the citizens in those areas are having the problem of over-eating. This explains that economic growth and nutrition are highly related.

In this situation, the national government needs to take the most action in the fight against malnutrition. In situations like these, people look for guidance as the problem seems too overwhelming for any individual to think he or she can help on their own. The government needs to install public programs to try and get the entire population involved in helping to end childhood malnutrition. Since some parts of the country have adequate amounts of food, educating them and explaining the dire need for food in other parts of the country may spark some compassionate individuals to use their resources and start campaigns to aid the more impoverished. The Charitable Endowment Fund Act of 1890 opened up the National Children's Fund which is a voluntary organization aimed at protecting the welfare of children (World Bank). More programs like that could possibly make more people aware of the severe situation happening in India.

Since 70% of the world's poor live in rural areas, the World Bank needs to focus on supplying these citizens with means of transportation to and from local food markets so that they can obtain what they need. In India, the sheer size of the region makes it difficult for the families who live in remote places to travel to and from food markets in order to get the supplies they need for a healthy lifestyle. Those individuals, who cannot travel due to lack of funds, or lack of transportation, can only rely on the food in the land that's readily available, and soon those natural resources will run out (Environmental, 4) In order to preserve the land and to provide a variety, the World Bank needs to find ways to transport these people easily into town.

Reducing the amount of poverty in India will not only allow more people to live a healthy life, cause less children to die of malnutrition, and help stimulate the economy, but it will also allow for a more unified country. There is a harsh distinction between the low, middle and upper classes causing there to be anger, envy and malice between the citizens of the same country. Happiness and food security can not exist if there if the citizens of a country do not get along. Since population growth is the main cause of all these coinciding problems, the best course of action is to reduce the population growth rate. One strict way to do this would be to implement child restrictions, and make it a law that a family can only have a specified number of children. If policies like these are instituted for a few years, there is a high possibility that the number of people residing in India could reduce significantly.

The Indian government needs to focus more on its impoverished communities and needs to make other, more financially stable countries, help by setting up public policies and organizations to help feed more citizens. Over the past few decades, the economy in India has gotten increasingly better, but thousands of children still die every year due to malnutrition. Everyone needs to help in order to decrease the amount of children who are hungry. Indian government needs to take advantage of its majority and use them to help fight against poverty. Food security should not be a luxury; it should be automatic to any human living in any country. Hunger is linked with poverty, environment, population and peace and in order to obtain happiness, all of these characteristics must be met in a positive way.

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