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“Food Security

Country: Zimbabwe
Capital: Harare
Population: 10.4 million
Language: ChiShona; isiNdebele; English
Religion: Indigenous beliefs; Christianity; Islam

It is about 6:30 on a Friday morning. The sun starts to rise. There is a slight breeze. This morning it is cool enough to see your crisp breath. A mother, father, and 4 children wake up to the cool morning in the remains of what is left of their house. The whole family gets ready to go work for the day. If the family is lucky enough they might get one meal for the whole day. The mother, father, and 4 children are scared, because of the questions remaining of “What if it is their last day to live? What if they don’t make enough money to buy small rations to eat? What if some fatal disease takes their lives?” What would you do? How would you feel if you were one of them? The problem we need to address is food security. Zimbabwe has extremely low food security. Food security exists when one has at all times, access a to sufficient, safe, and nutritious supply of food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an activity and healthy diet. One can be affected by factors such as poverty, health, food production, political stability, infrastructure, access to markets, and natural hazards. Food insecurity is the absence of food security and can cause famine or periodic hunger to uncertain food supply. It can cause undernourishment, which happens when there is an insufficient energy intake and malnutrition, which is a condition caused by deficiencies or imbalances in energy, proteins, or other nutrients. Some possible impacts on a community that can cause hunger are low rates of agricultural production, low access to food, HIV and AID’s, environmental sustainability, health, water, sanitation, climate change, natural disasters, conflict, and persecution. A household is considered food secure when its occupants have enough food. If the household doesn’t fear starvation and are getting enough nutrition to live, then they are on the right track of maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Some of the things affecting food security today include global water crisis, climate change, land degradation, and greedy land deals.

Zimbabwe hasn’t always had low food security. Zimbabwe used to have among the best health and education in Africa even though they still had about 854 million people who were undernourished. Their major exports included tobacco, gold, ferroalloys, nickel, and asbestos. The inflation has been worrying the country since 2007 because the government was printing 100 billion dollar bills that were only good enough to buy a few eggs. In 2007, rapid increases in oil prices increased fertilizer and other food production costs. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO) directed nearly 59 million US dollars in 2008 to help assist the most severely effected countries during planting seasons. As of September 2008, 92 million dollars had already been allocated to respond to the most immediate life-saving activities with the respect to food security, agriculture, health and nutrition for priority countries. The 787 sextillion percent inflation means that throughout the year prices kept doubling every 1.1 days. The largest amount of money that they use now is the 100 trillion dollar bill issued on January 2009. In Zimbabwe, food production has been devastated by their economy and political crises as well as natural disasters. They ended up having food shortages because the commercial supply chain and retail marketing systems got severely disrupted. With the rising global food prices, it may drive another 100 million people into poverty and hunger. Zimbabwe has become a net importer of food products and many millions of people are now dependent on food aid. Drought and series of poor harvests has also effect their acute food insecurity. Most farm incomes and productions are inadequate and food shortages are rising. People are getting sick from malnutrition or starvation. Households are relying increasingly on

remittances and emergency aid. Food security continues to worsen both for urban and rural populations. With the rise in unemployment and consequent male migration away from rural areas, households headed by women are increasingly common. There are also families with small plots of land without irrigation for their crops or their livestock. The high prices for land, food, and government expenses are bound to impact on the world's ability to achieve the Millennium Development Goals which are the reduction of poverty and hunger, child mortality, maternal health and basic education. There is help for The World Food Program (WFP), through its Global Response to High Food Prices, its enhancing the availability of nutritious food products for young children, mothers and other particularly vulnerable groups and The World Health Organization (WHO) helps countries access their health and nutritional situation, and monitors the most vulnerable. They also help promote hygiene and help ensure a safe food supply. The UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) helps developing countries enhance their food security. They help with developing sustainable agricultural practices. Life expectancy of Zimbabwe is the lowest in the world- 37 years for men and just 34 years for women. One of the problems for the early deaths are the 20.1% of the population with HIV and AIDS. "National infrastructure has deteriorated. About 40% of the road network is in poor condition, water and sanitation coverage is very poor, and railway freight traffic has declined by more than half since 1990, effectively isolating rural communities from markets." Everything is falling apart. Now looking at how Zimbabwe has changed for the worst, it is very evident low food security can impact a country.

We need to fix food security for many different reasons. The people need their lives back. Volunteers, emergency aid, and other people have come up with some different ideas on how to improve or how to make food security stronger. One of the ideas are increasing agricultural production. It could help by decreasing food prices for consumers, increasing rural incomes and contributing to economic development. But it wouldn't be sufficient in poverty reduction. Another idea is using science and technology. It could help increase food production (using new crop types); improvement in costs and quality of food storage, processing, packaging, and marketing. Improving access to and understanding of current technology and privately financed research is also important. Improving plant varieties using traditional plant breeding methods and occasionally biotechnologies can achieve higher yields, increased nutritional content, more tolerance to drought and pests, and more efficient use of water and soil nutrients. They need to find ways to keep crops alive and produce more food for their families and country. Another thing that could help the people are real paying jobs. Some of the people in Zimbabwe only make a \$1.25 each day. Its not enough to make ends meet for the people and their families. If we can figure out better ways to produce food then there would be more jobs for the people and that could also help get more money for families so they can buy what they need. If they didn't have such high inflation that also might increase the value of their dollar and help make their money stretch a little farther but their government has such high prices on everything including necessities. If the government brought the prices down, the people would be able to afford more for their families. An example is a chicken at a supermarket in Zimbabwe cost 10 US dollars and in America a chicken at a supermarket cost about 6 US dollars. Zimbabwe has 7 billion dollars in foreign debt. The country is trying to pay it back but they have placed the burden of the debt on their citizens leaving the people with little money left to purchase the necessities or food they need for their day to day living. The government and the people need to start improving food security for stronger and healthier lives.

Families have been transformed to a great degree over the last 50 years as a result in their structure (smaller-sized households, delayed marriages and childbearing, increased divorce rates and single parenthood), global trends in migration, HIV/AIDS and the impact of globalization. Mud and wattle or sun-dried bricks are used in house building in rural areas. In the kitchen there is a bench where it runs on the right side for the men to sit on, while the women sit on the left side on the floor. Unmarried men and women are rare to come across in Zimbabwe. In rural areas the family unit is commonly composed of the husband, the wife or wives, children, and extended family members. In urban areas the households are smaller, with a tendency towards a common family of the husband, the wife, and children. There are so

many homeless children that have to find some place to go or “live.” Its estimated that there are 12,000 children living alone on the streets in Zimbabwe. Some Zimbabweans are getting kicked out of their home by the police. Some of the Zimbabwean homes are burnt down or knocked down and if they can't afford a bus ticket, they stay there and live there. They are just left to fend for themselves. The government doesn't care if they are homeless or not. They have a limit on how much they can withdraw from their accounts everyday. What they can take out can't even buy a loaf of bread. In 2009, the people would have to pan for gold to pay for anything. If you couldn't get 0.3 grams of gold a day or if you are old or disabled you would most likely die. Some people are finding wild fruits to live off of. Other people are trying to sell things to get money. They are very lucky if they even get a meal a day. Non-government organizations are distributing food aid in rural areas. Some Zimbabweans are very ill but their relatives can't afford to send them to the hospital to get help. The hospitals are closing. People are dying of cholera. 3,000 people die from Aids every week. Some families don't even have enough money to bury their dead family member or members. The government is running out of the medication that they use to treat cholera. At church services, people are too afraid to shake other people's hands to share God's Peace because they are afraid that they are going to get a virus. Zimbabweans's land keeps getting taken away by the government. They have very little land left. What they have left, there are no crops growing. Families were using their farm animals for food and some families even have to feed their children rats. They don't always have power. With having black outs sometimes they have to use wood to cook their food with. Their supermarkets are pretty much empty. If there is anything in the supermarkets, its way too expensive for the Zimbabweans to be able to afford it. Vegetables are only available from street vendors. Their state services have collapsed. They have a shortage on milk and they are lucky if they get any water. In some of the villages, raw sewage flows down the streets. The smell can make you sick. Nearly all the schools are closed. Children aren't getting an education anymore. The children have to fend for themselves just to be able to try to get a meal everyday. The people say that its a very hard life. The life expectancy is very short because of the crumbling economy and Aids. The police beats the people. The government is destroying their life. Families are starting to move so they can maybe have a better life than what they have been living and others are still waiting for it to turn around. People are hoping that food security will improve and that maybe they will get their lives back.

Zimbabwe still needs help to improve food security. Zimbabwe has crumpled to pieces. They have so many problems. Their government isn't helping the people at all. The government is destroying the people's land and lives. There isn't enough room in churches for people to stay. Even if some families still have their houses left, because of mandatory government black outs the people don't normally have power. The government is trying to cut back on spending so much money. The people are struggling to get any crops to grow because of the land and because it is so dry and there is very little irrigation. Life is hard for families and the people. Everything is so expensive. There is not a lot of fresh produce because of the climate and drought. If there is any fresh produce, it comes at a high price. Most of the people can't afford it. Family need to find a steady paying job. Children need to go to school to get an education. Children should be in school everyday so they can learn. People are getting sick from the water and from malnutrition. Most of the hospitals are closed because they can't afford to keep the hospitals open. People are either moving or they are dying because of starvation, diseases, or freezing to death during the cool evenings. The people are trying to keep on looking for a positive outcome to come out of this all. Out of this all, there still is hope

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