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### **Kenya: Helping Kenya Reach Food Security**

The country of Kenya lies in East Africa-on the equator and borders the Indian Ocean to the southeast. The population of Kenya is more than 40 million people, in which over 40 different peoples and cultures are represented. The population is very young, having at least 73% under 30 years of age. The county's motto is "Harambee" which means "Let us all pull together" (Hinduism Today). To gain food security, that is what the country of Kenya needs to do. Kenya's biggest city and capital is Nairobi. Even in the capital, food security is very rare for anyone. The country is a very beautiful one. Kenya is known for its wildlife and national parks (Travel.State.Gov).

Walking into a farm family's life in modern day Kenya, you could expect to see approximately five people in the family, which is the nation's average. Each of these family members have at least 115 fewer calories in his/her diet than an average person in the world generally would, and these are the fortunate Kenyans (Rural Poverty Portal). An average annual income (using the poorest and richest), for a farm family is \$271, compared to America's average of \$77,169 (USDA Economic Research Service). However, the low income may have something to do with the size of their farms. The average family farm size is an astonishingly low 3 acres, whereas the world average is 441 acres. Realizing that, it is easy to see why the income is so low for Kenyan farmers. However, increasing farm size would put some people out of their normal life-style, because as others farm sizes increase there is not room for as many farmers. This could be a good change allowing other business and industries to emerge in Kenya and allowing the economy and food security to increase.

#### *Kenyan Crops Grown*

On these small farms a number of crops can be grown, primarily horticultural produce, tea and coffee. However, maize (corn) and beans are also grown on family farms of Kenya.

The crops grown differentiate by the farm's location. If the family farmed in the fertile highlands, they are to grow tea, coffee, sisal, corn, and/or wheat (Library of Congress-Federal -Research Division). When the farm is located in a low land, you would generally see crops such as coconuts, pineapples, cashew nuts, cotton, sugarcane, sisal, and/or corn (Library of Congress-Federal-Division). Then there are the swamp areas, where they would generally have rice fields.

Family farms in Kenya most often cannot afford to use machinery to farm their land. Instead they must use hoes and their hands to farm their ground, a practice thought very outdated in most countries. Due to the fact they have not been able to adapt modern agricultural practices, there is not much room to grow their small family farm, which is a major barrier in obtaining food security. Without being able to grow their operation, there is little chance in gaining a higher standard of living, let alone increasing food security.

#### *Barriers to Gaining Food Security*

There are multiple barriers in gaining all around food security in the country of Kenya. The barriers to improving agriculture productivity are what is truly holding Kenyan agriculture back. One of the major issues to improving the productivity and food security is women's rights and access to land (Mulama).

These women could be leaders in the agriculture community of Kenya; however, they are not given the chance to prove that, because they can not own land or have as many rights as men in Kenya.

Drought is a major issue in Kenya. It kills many of the crops, because very few Kenyan farmers have irrigation. These are the two major issues in Kenya. One bad year of weather can destroy a family right now (Rural Poverty Portal). Those are the times when humanitarian relief and food aid need to step in. However, at the same time the Kenyans need to work on improving their agricultural practices so that they can overcome droughts.

The climate in Kenya is also an issue in food security because it makes it very difficult to have reliable crop production, especially when irrigation is a scarcity. The climate and land type vary across Kenya (Gachene, and Kimaru). The weather varies from year to year, which makes it hard to decide which crops to produce. Added to the problem, Kenyan farmers are not aware of which crops grow best in which climates or soil types.

Another factor, which some would not consider an issue that would affect food security in a country such as Kenya, is crime. Crime is high in all regions of Kenya (Travel.State.Gov.). Many people try working for a living, but due to their lack of knowledge and skills, they feel stealing and crime is the only answer that they have left to obtain the food they need(Travel.State.Gov). When crime is high, it is hard to implement teaching methods. That is why the aid must step in with suggestions and ideas to avoid bringing in even more conflict.

Another extremely important barrier is the lack of the use of fertilizer in the land. Fertilizer increases productivity immensely, yet very few farms use fertilizer on their fields (Kenya Food Crisis). The implementation of fertilizer use would greatly increase agriculture productivity.

Employment also needs to improve to increase the food security in Kenya. The unemployment rate needs to decrease, but even more importantly is the quality of jobs. Many Kenyans do have full-time jobs, yet the income from these jobs does not give these Kenyans enough money to rise above the poverty line (Pollin, Githinji, and HeIntz). This lack of employment quality seriously hampers the ability of Kenyans to provide food security for their families. Even though they work all day, many Kenyans are not able to even buy the food needed for their families to survive. The quality of employment is the biggest barrier affecting employment in Kenya, which leads to food security.

An important factor to obtaining food security is access to food markets. Small farmers' access to selling at the food markets has almost been completely cut out in Kenya. The government of Kenya and wealthy Kenyans took over the food markets. However, people are now realizing that it must improve and are seeking ways to allow small farmers to participate in the food market (Library of Congress-Federal Research Division). The forcing out of the small farmers is the ultimate barrier in access to food markets. They must reinstate their role in the food market by participating.

An essential component to obtaining food security is adequate nutrition. The main barrier is the deficiency in micro-nutrients (Kenya Food Crisis). Iron and vitamin A deficiencies are highly prevalent in Kenya. Along with that, iodine deficiencies are also highly common. The majority of the population in Kenya also faces barriers in fortification, dietary diversification, and nutritional education. To gain adequate nutrition for the people these must improve.

Population growth is very easy to see; Kenya actually has one of the world's fastest growing population rates (Rural Poverty Portal). This is causing a country that does not produce enough food to sustain its current population, an even bigger and increasingly harder challenge. Even if the agricultural methods

begin to improve, it will be an enormous task to try to match their ever-growing population. This will be a very big obstacle; however, with time, careful planning and involvement of the people Kenya can overcome it.

### *Food Aid*

Mission trips are often focused in Kenya. There they work with the people often in a biblical way. Whether this is right or wrong, it does bring much needed relief to the Kenyans. However, the relief is not always helpful. The Kenyan people are a very vulnerable population. Many relief efforts go into the country of Kenya. A graduate from my high school, Hazy Kuhl, recently returned from a mission trip to Kenya. Outside countries are trying to help; however, the effectiveness of humanitarian relief and food aid needs to improve.

The climate creates disaster sites in Kenya. When this happens, the food aid and humanitarian relief are almost too abundant in the country. Often times the ones in disaster zones are not the people receiving the help. When providing help to a country such as Kenya, we must make sure it goes to the people who truly need the help.

Many Kenyans are in a disaster site and desperately need help to overcome obstacles they encounter. These people are literally fighting for their lives, and yes food aid provides an immediate help. Let's step back for a moment though and think about our own country, which has food security. When disaster strikes, aid is there right away, but then it leaves and helps somewhere else. They know what they need to do to overcome the crisis themselves. The aid that goes into disaster zones must implement the practices we use after help is gone; otherwise, it is just a temporary help to a huge problem that needs fixed.

According to Hazy Kuhl, after working as part of the humanitarian relief in Kenya, she says, "I think the people in Kenya respond fairly well to humanitarian relief, but I also think we as Americans can do a much better job!" Not every Kenyan receives humanitarian relief well, but in general it is accepted and used.

Many Kenyan people receive the help of humanitarian relief and food aid. These programs help many of Kenya's people from starving to death. These programs do good, but they do have some hampering effects on the food security of the country. Although the Kenyan people are receiving much needed food, it is becoming just handouts.

After going to Kenya, Hazy Kuhl says "By giving handouts we are not doing any good, in fact, giving aimlessly actually does more harm than good." If someone can get the food they need without working for it, there is no need for the Kenyans to try. An abundance of free food does not help because Kenyans would become dependent on that and not produce their own food to insure their food security for themselves. However, teaching the Kenyans what crops to plant and the right type of seeds to use, or providing seeds or animals would have a much greater impact on gaining food security.

Currently, what humanitarian relief and food aid is doing, is in no way making Kenya self-reliant on themselves. However, the ones providing it feel they must help, due to the ever increasing rate of starvation. Kenyans are becoming increasingly reliant on others for their own security, causing it to actually decrease their food security. To say the status of this factor is poor is an understatement. This factor must change. The situation is still fixable, but as it continues to remain this poor, the severity of the issue grows. This is due to the fact the reliance is becoming more and more on outside organizations than on the people of Kenya. The entire country is disadvantaged because of this. Even the few wealthy people of Kenya are being hampered. The country is becoming dependent, not independent causing every Kenyan to be at a disadvantage.

### *Measuring Lack of Food Security*

The trends of this factor should be under close watch. The amount of handouts given is becoming increasingly worse each and every day. Each month the food aid and humanitarian relief increase. As we continue to let them rely on others for their food and well-being, the trends have only one direction to go. This is a very easy factor to measure. The food, sources, and money, that are given to Kenya measure if it is worsening, remaining the same, or getting better. Right now it is increasing at a startling rate, causing the trend to become increasingly worse. However, the trend can change if proper practices are implemented. The factor is worsening at a rapid rate. This is causing an extreme problem for the rural family, as well as the urban family. Currently they are not dependent on themselves. Their dependence on others is increasing which causes the trend to increase. All Kenyans have been affected, except for the few that are wealthy, but now even those people are now seeing the harmful effects.

### *Ways to Improve Food Security*

If we improved the way humanitarian relief and food aid is conducted, the amount of food will greatly increase due to the fact the Kenyans would be more dependent on themselves for the food they need. The FFA Creed written by E. M. Tiffany states it best in saying “ in the life abundant and enough honest wealth to help make it so--for others as well as myself; in less need for charity and more of it when needed.” The people of Kenya need to depend on their own efforts to reach food security but have the support of the world when disaster strikes. Making changes would allow the Kenyan environment to change so that it can sustain the population.

The changes would lead to major increases in economic development because the amount of goods being produced in Kenya would grow greatly increasing the nation's economy. If more Kenyan people were providing for themselves, instead of relying on food aid or humanitarian relief, the entire economy of Kenya would increase. Anytime more people participate in the economy, it can only increase. The nation of Kenya would then increase, and not only their food security.

Implementing the changes would also benefit individuals. Women's rights would have a greater chance of increasing. As seen when America became more powerful, women's rights also increased. I foresee this happening in Kenya as it grows stronger. It can also help women because their food security would increase and the worries of starvation for themselves and their children would decrease. Smallholder farms could benefit, by adding an even higher demand for food and allowing a higher standard of farming practices to enter their country. It would also allow the smallholder farms to become more self-sufficient.

In my opinion, the humanitarian relief and food aid should not just be giving food and necessities out. Instead they should be donating to income generating projects and other influences to provide sustainability from their own land. I believe that they should continue helping people in great need, not just by giving them food, but also by teaching them how to properly farm and learn to grow or produce their own food. This would increase overall food security in Kenya. I believe teaching the people of Kenya will allow them to build their own wealth and overall security, not just food security. The farm family will then be able to grow and become an increasingly better farm, using new methods that will be taught to them. The aid should be in the form of seeds, animals, or tools needed.

Even if the farmers cannot afford irrigation, they could still be able to implement drought resistant crop. However, it again must start with knowledge; to implement these crops they must be aware they exist. In years of drought, having a drought resistant crop can save many Kenyan lives.

Teaching the people is what will change the country and the people who are already helping the population and are well-accepted would be the perfect instigators for this magnificent change in the country of Kenya that will allow it to become an increasingly more successful agricultural nation, which will lead to food security. However, teaching jobs in the urban setting will be as vitally important so that the economy can also grow, which will in turn come back to the farmers so that they will be able to incorporate more advanced farming methods. Incorporating these efforts will make the effects of these programs lasting and truly effective to the country of Kenya.

### *How to Implement Changes*

How to implement these programs is where everything must start. The main Millennium Development Goal that needs to be achieved is education. Kenya lacks in this development goal (Tracking the Millennium Monitor Goals). The relief and aid programs are the perfect candidates to implement this goal. I also believe that if the Kenyan government enforces a policy that directs humanitarian relief and food aid handouts in the country, that they will be followed in general and allow the population to benefit. Making learning to co-exist with charity will allow it to become more accepted with the Kenyan people. Generating a better life for the people of Kenya is the main goal. They can be key implementers in teaching Kenyans, which will allow their economy to grow and allow people to work outside of just agriculture. Food security will make the lives of these people extremely greater in quality. The government as well as relief agencies should invest in teaching to allow the country to grow. Using these methods, the hampering effects of humanitarian relief and food aid will cease to exist and will be great steps in insuring food security in Kenya by 2015.

Organizations that are outside the country should be the ones doing the teaching alongside leaders in Kenya. Corporations can come hold educational sessions for the people in Kenya to instigate even more teaching into the population. The communities' roles in implementing these practices would be accepted. If they do not buy into these practices, nothing will change. Individuals also need to become deeply involved in the new practices for the entire nation to grow. Each and every group and individual must work together to achieve this nation's success by 2015.

The urban families and rural farm families are the key people. If they do not follow through, nothing will change. The food security is for them; they must be the ones to insure their own security in order for them to have long-term success. These families are needed in every aspect of what they are for Kenya to become a successful country and maybe eventually a world power. Implementing these changes in what they farm could also improve the environment by allowing the soils to produce the crops they should. Instead of degrading the soil, it would improve soil quality.

When looking at what to teach Kenyans, food aid and humanitarian relief should work hand-in-hand with agricultural powerhouses (ie: Monsanto, Cargill, ect.) to provide the education needed. These companies can also provide the tools and technology needed. Working with Kenya would be beneficial to them not only with their public relation, but could test new products in various conditions. Boosting commerce in Kenya could easily create new customers for the companies also. Although it would be good for the companies, it would be life changing (in a positive way) for Kenyans.

Before writing this paper, I truly thought Kenya was a hopeless country and only had negative outlooks on the country. However, after looking into this country, I see how wrong I really was. Kenya could be a wonderful country. The Kenyans need education (Tracking the Millennium Monitor Goals). I believe that humanitarian relief and food aid can and should teach the Kenyans to grow their own food and become a self-sufficient country. The country has hope and can prosper given the right knowledge. Knowledge is the key to success for Kenya. Obtaining food security will lead to economic growth,

eventually limiting poverty. Food security can be obtained in Kenya. It will require hard work, cooperation, and above all knowledge, but it can be done following these and other practices by 2015.

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