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Jamaica, Factor 2: Water Scarcity

Jamaica: The island without usable water

Jamaica, a third world country in the Caribbean faces many challenges everyday. Although the country is surrounded by water, only a small portion of Jamaica actually has clean drinking water. Jamaicans work hard to make a living and to provide for their large families. Being a third world country means that Jamaica is not up to date with the latest technology, and can not afford some of the luxuries the United States has. The resorts on the tropical island are what bring the most money to the country.

Everyone takes part in the family when a Jamaican baby is born. Whether it is the grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, or siblings, they all live together under one roof. They do this to save money and for togetherness. Having four kids is the average size of children in Jamaican families. "Jamaican families remain a constant guiding force in their children's lives well beyond adulthood. You are never too old to be scolded or be given advice. As far as they are concerned it is always their child and they take that responsibility seriously," (Bailey). Religion is taken serious in Jamaica households. Almost all Jamaicans worship God and follow Christianity. "Religion and going to church is a very important part of Jamaican life," (Bailey). It is a way for people to fellowship and think on the bright side of life. Easter, Christmas and Independence are prominent holidays in Jamaica. Jamaicans love togetherness and family time.

"Jamaicans consume large amounts of carbohydrates such as rice, yams, sweet potatoes, breadfruit, bananas, plantains, peas and pumpkins,"(Miller). Although humans need protein to have strong bones, it is a rare occasion when Jamaicans actually receive it. Due to the fact that protein is expensive only a small portion of people actually get the proper intake they need. "Three ounces of protein is about the average serving size,"(Bailey). This in particular is one of the reasons why Jamaica is not an obese country unlike the United States. In the U.S. when Jamaicans come to visit they have to adapt their eating habits suitable to those here, in order to stay healthy and not get sick. Fruit is one of the major sources of food. It is delicious and fresh. This food is often served as a dessert or snack. Fast food restaurants are not common in Jamaica. People are more commonly known to prepare their freshly made meals at home. However when Jamaicans visit the U.S. it is a luxury for them to not have to make a meal. Preservatives are not found in foods as much as they are in the United States.

"Formal education in Jamaica is delivered via a four level system of education under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Culture. The four levels include: pre-primary (early childhood), primary, secondary and tertiary (post-secondary) education. Education is compulsory from primary through secondary school,"(Miller). Uniforms are generally worn for primary school. Many can not afford to go to school past sixth grade. The literacy rate is higher in women then in men. It is also higher among the younger population then the oldest of over 65. "Access to special education programs is limited and most are available in and near Kingston, the capital city. There is a paucity of services for rural consumers, so the special needs of this segment of the population remain unmet,"(Miller). Almost all of the country is in poverty so because of this, schools can not afford to buy books and supplies need to teach. Since supplies are limited teachers to their best to provide hands on experiences for the Jamaicans.

The impact of water on the infant mortality rate is extremely high in Jamaica. Pregnant women drink toxified water which can be deadly if not causing lasting effects on the baby." The health service delivery in the public sector is provided through a network of secondary/tertiary care facilities consisting of 24

hospitals including 5 specialist institutions (with a bed complement of 4736); and primary care facilities comprising 348 health centers, managed by the four regional health authorities,” (“Country Cooperative strategy at a glance”). Without the proper tools and education, infant mortality continues to be a problem and pregnant women often get sick after their pregnancy because of improper sanitation. Resources are limited because the country is a third world country but there are still available people to help when needed. If a person is in a serious condition they will be flown off the island to a different country with a facility that is better treated to suit their needs. Some Jamaicans have international health insurance. It costs money however and this is the reason why many don’t go to the doctor or have insurance because of the expenses. There is a weak country management and leadership so healthcare is not greatly managed.

Jamaica is known for growing coconuts, yams, bananas, water melons, oranges, apples, ackee, breadfruit, and cocoa. Jamaica is dedicated to its citrus production. The country’s hot and humid climate allows for fresh fruits and vegetables to be grown. As far as livestock, goats and chickens are the most common animals found on farms. One reason why these animals are raised in Jamaica is because there are many different resources that can be gained from these animals. Marijuana and other illegal drugs are grown here as well. Since people are always struggling to make money, workers are hired to work in the fields and pick produce from the richer.

Barriers to improve agricultural productivity includes the fact that Jamaicans that have money would rather spend it on entertainment and their own personal needs. Also, hardly any one continues on in their education so there is a lack of knowledge about the subject. Employment is hard to find in Jamaica. Many people are unemployed and live in poverty. Those that have jobs are struggling to keep them because of the income that comes into the business. The lack of education is another contributing factor as to why so many people don’t have jobs. Accessing food can be hard because of the expenses of getting to a store that sells it. Vehicles cost money and sometime stores are too far away to walk on foot. Therefore adequate nutrition is not received because it is expensive and hard to get.

“The economy in Jamaica relies mainly on the service sector, as it represents 60% of its GDP. Tourism is the most lucrative sector for the country welcoming an average of two million visitors per year,” (Children of Jamaica). Tourism brings in the majority of money and jobs into the country. Without vacationing resorts, the whole country of Jamaica would be filled with poverty.

Without good clean water, not much can be done. Fields can not be irrigated because of the pollution and chemicals that have been mixed with the once good drinking water. The climate is tropical, however irrigation still needs to be done in several parts of the country. To improve the yields and make the fruit richer, irrigation is recommended. It will always raise incomes because of the money received for exporting. One woman had to use mosquito water with bleach to take a shower. Jamaica’s water supply has gotten so bad that it is affecting the people’s everyday life activities. Businesses and restaurants have had to close due to the lack of water. Jamaica is a tropical country so there are a lot of fruit trees that grow there. However, when it comes to making meals, water is needed either as an ingredient, to drink, or to boil certain foods. With the scarcity of water in this country Jamaicans save up on clean water every chance they get.

In each Jamaican community there is a water pump house that supplies the whole town with water. There is no security watching it at night. This gives mad people the opportunity to dump toxins, chemicals, trash, and other unsanitary substances into the tank. This happens to several water houses several times a month. Each family has to pay their bill to be able to retrieve water from the pump. With this being said, it makes many people angry by the fact that the water they are paying for might not be healthy and clean for them to drink. As a result, people are not drinking the water and getting sick from dehydration and improper nutrition. A possible solution would involve putting locks on the supply houses.

Not producing enough food could be a real problem. When it is impossible to get clean water, which makes it hard for farmers to grow crops. By not having enough drinking water it makes it a possibility to get sick and possibly die because every human needs water to live. If someone is sick then they can not work resulting in a lack of income. When businesses and restaurants have to close down because they are unable to prepare food or run their store because of the bad water supply, that is also going to be a job loss. Not many Jamaicans have jobs. The good ones are working at the Resorts. The Resorts are what bring in the most money to the country. Sometimes people can get jobs working at convenient stores, or being teachers at the school. More than half are unemployed and struggling to put food on the table.

Not being able to put food on the table can result in not enough nutrition for their bodies. They will not receive the adequate nutrition they need to have strong bodies because of the lack of crops and water, or because they simply can not afford the food.

In present day Jamaica, they are doing a fine job in improving their water supply. The poorest region of Jamaica is still struggling to make it but as of right now, Jamaica is meeting the overall demand for water supply. This situation can be as severe as people make of it. Living without water is fatal. However, people are trying hard to bring fresh clean drinking water to those in need through missionary projects, and through the Red Cross Association.

According to “Jamaica National Environmental Action Plan,” water in Jamaica is not what it used to be in terms of stream flow and quality and has become a subject of major concern. Although it has shown signs of improvement, it is still not where it should be. Pollution of surface, ground, and sea water threatens human health and tourism revenues. Water for domestic purposes is frequently in short supply island wide. The environment is showing signs of suffering due to water scarcity which results in plants not growing that also means lack of food for the people.

Developing countries are particularly disadvantaged because of the lack of technology. They are not as familiar with the new search engines and medical technology that can be used to help people. The lack of connection through internet or other means however affects their ability to make sense of the situation within a national or global context. Women in particular are very poor. They are giving everything they can to their children and not thinking about themselves. Most women are having too many children and they can not afford to clothe, house, and feed them. The importance of stable families is crucial to the development of the country. Women get into trouble by having too many children because the fathers tend to stray away as a result of the costs and work to support their families.

Women can not afford for health clinics, reproduction control, or abortion clinics so most women have health problems after they give birth. Some are fatal and some may affect the baby. Women, especially in poor inner-city communities, are mothers to multiple children with multiple absent fathers. A portion of these women do anything for their children even if it means starving themselves so their child can eat or giving their child unsanitary water so they do not die of dehydration.

Depending on the area of Jamaica, over half of the country has pipes that are dry. The people have to walk to creeks for their water or get rainwater. The trends of water scarcity have decreased and are slowly getting better. The excess amount of rainwater that has been coming in has made there be more available drinking water. However it is still a problem in parts of the country. The trend is measured by population growth and deaths, water demand, and climate change. These measurements play a major role in the situation changing. They are able to tell who is struggling, the water quality, who needs the water, and if the water is safe. These measurements have shown that the list of people who use to demand water has

gone down. Not many people are dying because they are drinking toxic water. Research shows that the country is slowly growing out of water scarcity.

Rural farming is improving across the area because of the tropical weather. Crops are improving making a more abundant supply of food. Farmers are able to sell their crops and use that profit to buy clothes, and other food their families need. A majority of the people have clean, safe, drinking water for the entire family improving their life styles.

Improving the water supply would increase the amount and quality of food because it would be properly irrigated throughout the growing season. The result of all the water and sunshine would make an abundance of food for the people and community to eat. Income would go up as well if the people sold the crops or worked for farmers who needed workers.

The environment is becoming more stable with fruit trees and a tropical climate to bring in the rain. It would preserve the country for years to come leaving it with luscious soils and fresh drinking water. More businesses would be able to open making the country and economy more developed. Poverty reduction may go down as people have a steady income and can afford a small house to live in.

Improving water scarcity would help out the smallholder farmers. The farmers would not have to worry about if their crops will die of disease from the unsafe water or if there will be a sufficient amount of water for their fields. The farmers could rely on a steady income and not have to worry whether or not their crops will get them through the year.

With population growing and the climate always changing, water scarcity will probably always be a problem in part of the country of Jamaica. Pollution will always affect Jamaica and will continue to make water scarcity and water pollution a problem. With the population always growing, it means that more and more people have a demand for water making water hard to find.

Based on research, putting a lock on water pump houses at night would be an easy way of helping to keep Jamaica's water supply safe and healthy. By making laws so people can not dump their wastes into the water supply would be another recommendation as to keeping people safe and improving not only the water, but the food as well.

Bringing in a new technology system could potentially purify water. This goal could potentially enforce keeping the water quality up to a manageable degree. With the use of the internet, they could learn to boil their water before drinking it and what foods are and are not safe to eat in Jamaica. Some goals include bringing in a healthier water supply for the people. Some developmental goals could include teaching the people more first aid such as bandaging, CPR, and how to care for themselves.

One project that could scale up Jamaica to make it more successful would be educating people on proper nutrition. People could go to Jamaica and teach them about poor food choices and what they should be consuming in their diets to have strong bones. Educating Jamaicans about water quality and how to boil it before drinking the water could potentially save several lives. By doing so they would be boiling out the dirt and making it sanitary to drink.

Communities could be raising money to bring over to Jamaica. Jamaica communities could be working together to make life easier to live. The national government and other organizations could be supporting grants or making care packages for missionaries to take to Jamaica. They could be testing the water quality and keeping the citizens safe. Rural and urban farmers make a majority of the food in the country.

They could be helping to educate the community or donating some of their produce to those that don't have food.

Jamaica will always be a third world country if these trends continue. People will always be living in poverty. However a single person can make a difference in someone's life. Whether it is educating the public about nutrition, putting in water purifying system, or getting a local farmer to donate some food, people are good to others. No child should have to go without supper. Let's make a difference.

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